A CENSURED PLAY

THE BREAKING POINT

BY
EDWARD
GARNETT

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WITH PREFACE AND A LETTER
TO THE CENSOR

BY

EDWARD GARNETT

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TO

THE CENSURED

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PREFACE

A SERIOUS play that has been suppressed by the Censor claims the interest of those people who are striving to obtain an intellectual English drama—a drama that is a criticism of life. I submit to them the case of "The Breaking Point."

In December last Mr Frederick Harrison, in accepting "The Breaking Point" for production at the Haymarket Theatre, wrote to me as follows—

"There is no money in 'The Breaking Point' for a run, because the general public sets its face stubbornly against sad plays. And yours is more than sad—it is tragic. . . . I should be proud to be the first to introduce your dramatic work to the public or to that section of the public which is alive to what the theatre might be."

And Mr Harrison adds that his wish is to produce "plays that will take us out of the dull, dreary round of conventionality."

The ground on which the manager of "The Haymarket Theatre" offered to produce the "The Breaking Point" was in fact the highest ground of all—that the play was an artistic, not a commercial production, and appealed to that section of

the public which has ideals, and is alive to what the theatre might be.

But Mr Redford, the Censor, replies—No, this play is not fit to be performed on the public Stage. It shall not be performed.

It is not a question of morals. I do not suppose that the most stupid member of an average audience would say, after seeing "The Breaking Point," "This play is immoral." It is obviously a moral play—strongly moral, for it happens to inculcate moral lessons in several aspects.

The scheme of the play is this: A girl, Grace Elwood, has intimate relations with her lover, Sherrington, a man whose wife has previously left him. Her father, Dr Elwood, and her lover quarrel for control of her. The girl, fearing she is *enceinte*, cannot stand the strain, and succumbs. This is the tragedy. The moral, so far as there is one, is directed against the male egotism of two unseeing and self-willed men.

No, it is not a question of morals. But Mr Redford, the Censor, who has licensed many silly, inane, semi-indecent plays, both original and versions of French farces,[1]—Mr Redford, the Censor, suppresses "The Breaking Point" because it has for its theme the tragic emotions that arise from the position of a girl who is fearing to become a mother. Mr Redford either considers that it is improper to treat this theme at all, or that my treatment of it is immoral or indecent.

[1] Such as *The Cuckoo*, *The Spring Chicken*.

If the latter is the case, I challenge the Censor to point out a single line that is indecent or contrary to good morals. But if it is the subject that is objected to, I claim that this is a legitimate subject for tragedy, and that mine is a drama of the tragic passions. By suppressing this play, the Censor is flagrantly abusing his powers. If any member of the audience considers the girl Grace Elwood's position shocking or indecent, it is time that this drama should be staged to give him insight into the tragedy in human life. If it is a matter of *taste*, and any member of the audience finds the "Breaking Point" too sad or harrowing, he has his remedy. He need not go to the theatre, or he can walk out of the theatre, saying, "It got on my nerves."

But if modern tragedies are to be suppressed by the Censor because they are poignant and tragic—because they get on people's nerves—they will be suppressed because of their power as works of art. Whatever the merits of the play may be, there are no cheap effects such as the popular melodramatist, Sardou, produces in *La Tosca*, with his scene of physical torture. The heroine Grace Elwood's torture, is *mental*, the torture of a mental agony arising from the strain of her position, fearing motherhood while torn between the love of her father and her lover; and I claim that such a subject excites in an audience the deepest and gravest emotions.

Now, if the author be accused of taking his play

too seriously, he replies that he would have looked upon it as an ordinary attempt in drama, but for the Censor's action in suppressing it. But its suppression raises the main question—Why do we see staged every year only half a dozen plays that seriously try to analyse modern life? The author therefore invites the reader to go straight to the root of the matter, and to ask himself, not, "Do I like this play?" but, "Is not the Censor biassed by the prejudices and limitations of the crowd against a serious artistic drama? Has the Censor the right to suppress a work of art because it is painfully tragic? Has he not exceeded his true functions?" Obviously a work of art rests on the most delicate of balances. Half of the critics might go away from a performance of "The Breaking Point," saying, "Ah, if the author only had genius, he would have made us feel far more." And the other half may at the same time object that the play is too strong, too tragic. Yet another critic might bridge the gulf by saying, "This is a play of *feeling*, and its artistic justification lies in the actors' power to evoke the fine shades of the passions." But if "The Breaking Point" be a false or a bad work of art, if it be not really a drama true to human nature, it will not produce a painfully tragic effect on the reader. In any case, whatever its artistic merits may prove to be on the stage, I contend that the Censor has here shown that he cannot discriminate between an immoral work and a work of fine art, and that he has in fact suppressed

it because it is a work of tragic intensity, one not likely to please the average playgoer. It may be said that "The Breaking Point" is pathological tragedy, but in this sense of the word half of the great tragedies are pathological. Pathos means suffering, and Aristotle's definition of the function of tragedy, "to purify the soul through pity and terror," implies a strong pathological element. Greek tragedy, such as *The Electra*, the *Medea*, the *Œdipus*, the *Agamemnon*, French tragedy, such as *Phèdre*, Russian tragedy, such as *The Powers of Darkness* (and Mr Redford did, in fact, suppress Tolstoy's great work till pressure was brought to bear upon him), and English tragedy, such as *Lear*—all these are so pathological in their deepest passages as to be, at crises, almost unendurable. But is modern tragedy to be censured and suppressed because it, too, is painful? Because it analyses the struggle between a father and a lover for the control of a woman who fears motherhood? That is what it comes to. Every critic who knows his business (and Mr Redford, the Censor, I believe, has never claimed to be a literary critic), be he a Brandes, a Lemaître, or a Matthew Arnold, or be he one of our own dramatic critics, Mr Archer, Mr Max Beerbohm, Mr Walkley—every critic knows that the folly of censuring and suppressing works of art lies in the fact that a critical judgment must be largely a matter of personal taste. One critic admires Wagner, but does not like Ibsen; another cannot stand Wagner, but swears by Tolstoy; a

third admits D'Annunzio, but condemns Hauptmann, etc., etc. But our Censor, who is not a literary man, claims the right of suppressing artists, great or small, who do not give our middle-class public pleasure!

No. *It is not the Censor's function to suppress works of art.* Let us lay this down as our first axiom: (1) A work of art that is on a high plane and makes an appeal to the finer intelligence of an audience is outside his domain. (2) It is the Censor's business *to prevent gross or prurient indecency on the public stage.* Nothing else. Simply to prevent gross or prurient indecency. As to questions of *taste* in intellectual drama, and the moral, intellectual, and artistic aspects of the same, neither the Censor nor anybody else is fitted to hold a *veto.* Let us lay down this as a third axiom: (3) It is not the Censor's business to suppress intellectual plays that criticise contemporary life, or plays (such as Ibsen's or Mr Bernard Shaw's) that introduce new moral teaching. Half the best works of art in literature, the drama, and the arts, are revolutionary to the taste of their times; they do not flatter the tastes, feelings, or prejudices of the great public; they would not be works of art if they did. From Molière to Victor Hugo, from Victor Hugo to Ibsen, the best plays have raised a storm of controversy, of indignant protest. The history of art is one long chain of these censurings and attempted suppressions. As everybody knows, certain of Molière's best plays were actually suppressed and withdrawn, owing to the

hostile social influences of the day, and others would have never seen the light, or would have perished, had not Louis XIV. intervened and protected the dramatist's work.

This is the whole question of serious artistic drama on the English Stage. The Censor's claim to dictate to the intellectual public what it may or what it may not see (whether it be Tolstoy's *Powers of Darkness*, Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Brieux's *Maternité*, or Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession*) must be challenged and restricted. Let us lay down as a fourth axiom: (4) There are many publics—each wanting a drama on a different level; and they have no right to interfere with one another, or suppress one another's drama. Yet this is what the intellectual public suffers at the hands of the general public, and the Censor is the official instrument of this intolerable interference. But it may be asked—How is the Censor to guide himself as to what is indecency or immorality on the Stage? We, the Critics, must help him. There is a very simple and effectual weapon in the hands of the intellectual public which the latter has not yet used—I mean *Combination*. I invite the reader's attention to the scheme appended (see page xviii.), viz., a Society for the Defence of Artistic and Intellectual Drama.

A serious artistic drama implies a freed drama. Literature has been freed from the Censor, fine art has been freed, and the drama must be freed. Personally I may like Tolstoy's *Powers of Darkness*,

while Ibsen's *Ghosts*, Brieux's *Maternité*, and Bernard Shaw's *Mrs Warren's Profession* may be too painful for my taste, or they may not answer to my artistic ideals; but I have no right to prevent the people who want to see them from seeing them on the stage, any more than I have the right to prevent people from reading them as books. It is monstrous to say that such Plays corrupt or debauch the public mind. They may pain or shock the general public that does not understand them, or that cannot judge of them, but there is no more necessity for the general public to go to the theatre which stages these works than for me to go to the theatre that stages the last Gaiety farce, which pains and shocks my moral and mental tastes and artistic conceptions. Just because the half-educated public desires to suppress Maeterlinck's, Hauptmann's, and Tolstoy's drama, for that very reason the intellectual public must combine in its own defence, and make its power respected; and it has, I repeat, a strong weapon in its hands, which it has never yet properly used. We must help the Censor (who now goes in fear of the unlimited powers of country archdeacons and Mrs Grundy to raise an outcry) to make serious artistic drama strong and respected.

Accordingly, without attaching special importance to the play printed here, "The Breaking Point," except as a fair test case, I claim the support of modern critics, modern dramatists, and literary men generally, and of all intelligent lovers of serious drama; I claim their support against the Censor

on the lines laid down above, viz., that whether the reader likes or dislikes "The Breaking Point," it is not an indecent or immoral work. And I direct the critics' attention again to the particular question at issue.

The Censor asserts that "The Breaking Point" is not fit to be performed on the English Stage because it is immoral or indecent.

The Manager of the Haymarket holds on the contrary that it belongs to that class of work which elevates the Stage: he writes:—

"There is no money in 'The Breaking Point' for a run, because the general public sets its face stubbornly against sad plays. And yours is more than sad. It is tragic. . . . I should be proud to introduce your dramatic work to the public, or to that section of the public *which is alive to what the Theatre might be.*"

EDWARD GARNETT.

August 1907.

APPENDIX

A Society for the Defence of Intellectual Drama

What social forces does the Censor, Mr Redford, represent? He represents among other things the general public's prejudices, indifference, and hostility to intellectual drama. As such he yields to the public's hostility and clamour against it one day, and the next year, or in ten years, he bows to intellectual opinion. But the deeply harmful effect of the Censor's influence is his power of hindering the development of intellectual drama. He terrorises would-be dramatists. Serious dramatists, always in fear of the great public's intolerance, embodied in the Censor's power of suppressing unpopular plays, are deterred from making a deep analysis of actual life. The game of writing serious drama is not worth the candle. You are suppressed by fear of the Philistine before you begin, or you are suppressed by the Censor after you have finished. The deeper and truer the work, the more unlikely it is to be approved by the Censor. This is especially the case with any serious picture of marriage and the emotions between men and women. So our ablest writers

have for generations turned to fiction, and expressed themselves in the novel. But it is high time they should turn to the stage. *At present the morality of the novel is, on the whole, on a higher plane, and shows far deeper insight into life, than the morality or insight of the Stage play.* Why is this? The former is free, and the latter is in the leading strings of the half-educated general public and the Censor.

We know that chiefly owing to Mr Granville Barker's artistic successes at the Court Theatre, which are showing our theatrical managers the way, that there are better chances to-day of an Intellectual English Drama springing up than has been the case hitherto in our generation. But we cannot expect Mr Granville Barker to do more than fight his own battles. His programme will be necessarily limited to the sphere of activities of his own theatre, the Savoy. There is no doubt that the hands of the whole body of men working in one way or another for the new intellectual drama would be much strengthened if some central body could be formed to challenge authoritatively the Censor's vexatious and unintelligent verdicts.

With this end I suggest the formation of a Society for the Defence of Intellectual Drama. If an Executive Committee were formed of, say, a score of our leading critics and others, with a General Council consisting of as many literary men and lovers of the drama as came forward in support, we should then have an organisation whose verdict on any piece of intellectual drama suppressed by the

Censor would carry great weight with the press and with thoughtful people. The Censor would have a new force to balance against that of the Philistines and the purely "popular critics." The Censor would also be forced to understand the art and the morality of the plays he now censures. And the aim of the Society would be to emancipate the drama from the Censor's leading strings, and to restrict him to his proper function of keeping gross or prurient indecency off the public Stage.

E. G.

A LETTER TO THE CENSOR

To George Alexander Redford, Esq.

Sir,—On July 4th I addressed to you a letter inquiring as to the reasons which had determined you to veto my play, "The Breaking Point." You replied on July 5th, in a letter marked "Private," which evaded my question; and you enclosed a printed memorandum stating that "The Licenser has no official cognisance of authors as such."

That is to say, you claim the right to ignore my existence while destroying my property—for a play debarred the Stage is practically destroyed. It is possible that the law sanctions your claim; but I can scarcely think it wise of you to entrench yourself behind a law so manifestly repugnant to the plainest principles of justice.

The prisoner indicted for felony has a right to be heard in his own defence. The judge does not say to him, "I sentence you to be hanged, but you must not ask me my reasons, for I have no official cognisance of your existence." Dramatic authorship is not, so far as I know, in itself a crime; yet I am denied the elementary fair play allowed to the accused. Judge and jury in one, you fine me the

whole value (great or small: that is not the question) of a work to which I have devoted months of thought; and when I want to know wherein lies my misdemeanour—

> Yours not to reason why,
> Yours not to make reply!

My very existence is an inconvenience, not to say an impertinence, of which you have no official knowledge; and if you condescend to admit it unofficially, it must be without prejudice to your official ignorance, and in a "private" letter.

I decline, sir, to recognise your right to claim privacy for your communications with dramatic authors. You are a public official, however anomalous and unconstitutional your office; and you must not call upon authors subjected to your tutelage to abet you in shirking a responsibility which (whatever may be the wording of obsolete Acts of Parliament) ought, by every rule of justice and reason, to be inseparable from the power you exercise. Our relation is not that of one private gentleman to another, but of judge and prisoner at the bar. You can scarcely expect a prisoner who has had no semblance of a fair trial to be scrupulous in safeguarding the secrecy of the tribunal.

Your private letter, then, runs:—

"*5th July* 1907.

"Dear Sir,—I trust you will absolve me from any discourtesy if I point out that my official relations

are only concerned with the Managers of Theatres. It is always painful to me to decline to recommend a license, and in this case I hoped to avoid any possible appearance of censure on any one by suggesting privately to Mr Harrison the desirability of withdrawing this piece. I cannot suppose that he has any doubt as to the reason.—I am, Dear Sir, Yours faithfully. G. A. REDFORD."

As the human mind is capable of marvels in the way of self-deception, I am willing to suppose you sincere in imagining that you adopted this underhand course in sheer kindness of heart. You thought it considerate to hint to Mr Harrison the error of his ways, without inflicting on him the indelible stigma of your formal disapproval. Perhaps you reflected that though, in official theory, plays come into being without authors, yet there was probably a playwright somewhere around; and you told yourself that you were following the dictates of humanity in suffering him to bury his work in secrecy and silence. You would not blight his young career by putting on record the inquest and the verdict of censure. You would temper justice with mercy. You would use your giant's strength gently, unobtrusively, almost tenderly.

Will you think it very ungrateful of me if I look a little deeper into your motives, and suggest that all this tenderness for Mr Harrison's feelings and mine was merely another device for evading responsibility? Of course it would be mightily

convenient for you if authors would be kind enough to suppress their own works, instead of forcing upon you the burden of judgment and the odium of execution. In "suggesting privately the withdrawal of a play," you are simply trying to ensure silent acquiescence in your verdict. In how many cases you find this device successful I cannot say; but with me it has not succeeded. You have put my play out of existence, so far as the stage is concerned; and I do not propose to aid you in pretending that it never existed at all.

Is it possible you really imagine that any intelligent person feels the slightest stigma in your disapproval, or would be at the smallest pains to conceal from the world the fact of his having incurred it? The material loss I do not speak of, the artistic inhibition is galling; but as for any shame or discredit attaching to your "censure," the idea is absurd. On the contrary, the chief consolation one feels is the thought of the very distinguished company in which one finds oneself. Almost every dramatist of European renown has at one time or another fallen under your ban. Tolstoy, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, D'Annunzio, Brieux—it is nothing but an honour to share, however unworthily, the outlawry of such men as these.

Your predecessor vetoed *The Cenci;* you, I am credibly assured, have vetoed the *Œdipus Rex;* while for the whole tribe of *Spring Chickens* and *Giddy Goats* "your bounty is as boundless as the sea." If reputation alone were in question, who

would not rather incur your frown, along with Sophocles and Shelley, than share the smiles which you lavish on prurient frivolity? You may spare yourself the trouble, then, of taking "unofficial" and "private" steps out of consideration for the feelings of the authors you "censure." No one—even among the people who are for retaining your office, lest a more foolish censorship should replace it—no one has the slightest respect for your judgment. Your disapproval carries with it no more dishonour than your approval carries honour. Indeed, in censuring Tolstoy, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, these great European artists, you invite comparison with the illustrious Tomkyns, the Censor of Literature in 1667, who, we are told, "did not approve of certain tendencies in Milton's 'Paradise Lost.'" Mr Tomkyns was induced, eventually, to "overlook these tendencies," but we know that Mr Redford still does not approve of the tendency of Ibsen's *Ghosts*, of Maeterlinck's *Monna Vanna*, of Brieux's *Maternité*.[1] As Censor you are still determined to teach these European poets and teachers what they ought to think, and how they ought to express themselves when they appeal for a public hearing. Both your office, and the manner in which you exercise it, are out-of-date and ridiculous.

Again I hand you my play, this time in printed form; and again, but this time publicly, I ask you what was your reason for "declining to recommend a licence" for it. Can you discover in it a single

[1] These plays are not allowed on the English Stage.

indecent phrase or suggestion, a single speech that incites to laxity of conduct? Other plays which have fallen beneath your ban may, perhaps, have touched upon contested moral questions; so that, assuming it to be your duty to check all ethical progress, you may have been, from your own point of view, justified in rejecting them. But "The Breaking Point" does not belong to this class of play. It takes current morality as it finds it, and shows the tragic consequences of a breach of its dictates. Even from your own point of view, what is there in this that calls for censure?

Do the rules of your office set it down as indecent to allude to the condition of pregnancy? Manifestly no. There is no more favourite sentimental situation on the Stage than the young wife's avowal to her husband (who is always no less surprised than delighted) that Heaven has blessed their union. How often have you licensed this exquisite episode? Nor can you allege that the Lord Chamberlain takes "official cognisance" only of legalised pregnancy. The situation in which a girl informs her seducer that she is about to become a mother is even more frequent. It would be tedious and superfluous to cite individual examples. Let me merely remind you of two recent variations upon this theme, neither of which incurred your "censure." In *The Shulamite*, the whole action turned upon a question of simulated pregnancy, while in *Votes for Women* the heroine was represented as having undergone, at the instance of the hero, an illegal operation.

After swallowing such camels as these, why should you strain at my little gnat?

The only feature in the case set forth in "The Breaking Point" for which one could not find parallels in scores of plays licensed by you is the fact that the heroine is represented as being uncertain of her condition. Is this the stumbling-block and rock of offence? If this be indeed the ground of your action, I am sure I shall carry my readers with me in marvelling at its senseless and childish prudery.

You are always ready to licence plays (with or without music) which glorify and idealise vulgar and flashy lewdness. You "decline to recommend for licence" a play which, without a word of indelicacy or crudity, alludes to the tortures of that period of agonised doubt, which is not the least among the penalties of illicit motherhood.

Could there be a more cutting commentary on the futility of your office and the unintelligence with which you administer it?—I am, sir, Yours etc.

EDWARD GARNETT.

THE CEARNE,
NEAR EDENBRIDGE,
August 1907.

CHARACTERS

James Elwood, D.D., D.C.L., *Professor of Hebrew and Oriental Languages (retired). Aged* 67.

Miss Grace Elwood, *his only daughter. Aged* 23.

Miss Dorothy Elwood, *his sister. Aged* 65.

Mrs Sherrington.

Mr Lewis Sherrington, *of "Lutterton Lodge." Aged* 33.

Mr Francis Mansell, *a barrister friend.*

Collins, *an old gardener in Dr Elwood's service.*

Agatha, *a maid-servant in Dr Elwood's service.*

Mary, *maid-servant in Sherrington's house.*

The Scenes take place at Lutterton Lodge, and at "Bewlands," Dr Elwood's house—neighbouring houses in Tilsworthy, near Exeter. Also in Tor Wood on river bank near by.

ACT I

THE BREAKING POINT

ACT I

Scene 1

A large pleasant dining-room in Sherrington's house, which looks out on lawns and meadows sloping to river. Old-fashioned panelling. Furniture in good taste, with air of masculine requirements. Books and magazines lying about. Lunch table near the French window, at which Sherrington and Mansell are sitting. Time: Late October.

[*Sherrington is a well-dressed man of thirty-three with easy manner and rather good looking. Mansell is a quiet, restrained type of man.*]

Sherrington.

(*Pushing cigar-box towards Mansell*) Have a cheroot?

Mansell.

I'll stick to my pipe, thanks. You never took to a pipe, did you? (*He takes out his pipe and fills it.*)

Sherrington.

No. (*He takes a cigarette and strikes a match abstractedly.*)

MANSELL.

(*Leaning over and taking the match*) Thanks. (*He leans back and puffs his pipe, eyeing Sherrington.*) You're looking rather fagged.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, I am rather down.

MANSELL.

Do you remember Cooper, that queer chap at King's? He used to divide all men into three classes—pipe-men, cigarette-men, and cigar-men. What's become of him?

SHERRINGTON.

Haven't the least idea. (*He gets up, and walks once or twice up and down the room.*)

MANSELL.

(*Smoking and eyeing a picture on the wall*) Cooper used to say that the pipe-men were steady men, the cigarette-men good at a spurt, and the cigar-men (*interrupting himself*)—that's a very nice water-colour! Where did you get it?

SHERRINGTON.

(*Halting*) Oh, a friend in Paris.

MANSELL.

In Paris? (*Looking at the drawing again.*) I didn't

know the French did things like that. I should have said it was English.

SHERRINGTON.

What's that? Oh, the water-colour! Yes, that's English. I thought you were looking at the etching.

MANSELL.

Who did it?

SHERRINGTON.

Oh, a man called Vaughan. A Welshman.

[*A pause.*

(*Suddenly*) Mansell! Look here, I've something to tell you. I'd better tell you first of all that I didn't ask you to come down here, as I said, for the shooting.

MANSELL.

(*Turning round surprised*) My dear fellow!

SHERRINGTON.

I want you to help me! the fact is I'm—distracted—in a tight place. You're the only friend I can speak to, and I don't know whether you *can* help me.

MANSELL.

My dear fellow!

SHERRINGTON.

Thanks. (*Presses Mansell's hand.*) Don't mind

my walking about. I know I get on your nerves—but I'm—distracted.

MANSELL.

What is it?

SHERRINGTON.

Well, the fact is—(*he is silent*).

MANSELL.

(*Reassuringly*) Yes?

SHERRINGTON.

You know all about my life with my wife, don't you?

MANSELL.

Yes, pretty well all.

SHERRINGTON.

You know that I only lived with my wife for three years, and that we haven't one feeling in common. You know that she left me suddenly, and went off with a friend of mine, Danby, and lived abroad, and that I was glad she went. I told you all that, didn't I?

MANSELL.

Yes.

SHERRINGTON.

Well, you know that I didn't divorce her. I've always hated washing one's dirty linen in public—

it's unclean—the whole thing's unspeakable, if you can avoid it. Now I want to, I want to, and she doesn't. And she's just turned up here again.

MANSELL.

When?

SHERRINGTON.

Last week she came here, and again this morning, Mary says, when I was meeting you in Exeter. And she left a message to say she was coming back this afternoon. Just at the very worst moment. But it isn't my wife I want to talk of.

MANSELL.

Not your wife? What is it, then?

[*Sherrington doesn't speak.*

My dear fellow, you can speak to me.

[*Sherrington is silent.*] [*A pause.*

You say you want a divorce?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, I want one badly. I'm *forced* to want one—not merely for myself. Do you understand?

MANSELL.

(*Concerned*) My dear chap!

SHERRINGTON.

It's, it's—

MANSELL.

You mean you love somebody else.

SHERRINGTON.

It's like this, Frank. There's a woman, a girl here. I love her to distraction, and she me. She's given herself to me—she's given me her future—her family know nothing. Do you see? And now it's *necessary* that she should come to me.

MANSELL.

(*Staring*) Necessary? Are you *sure* it's necessary?

SHERRINGTON.

I'm not absolutely sure, but I believe the thing has happened.

MANSELL.

Good God! what a position!

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, I'm—*hideously* to blame.

MANSELL.

But why didn't you try for a divorce, when you first began to fall in love with her?

SHERRINGTON.

I ought to have, but I didn't see that it was any good. It's all a frightful tangle from the beginning.

Her father is one of those jealous old men who sacrifice their daughters to themselves—who set their faces against any man who enters the house, who don't *mean* their daughters to marry. And the fact of my divorcing my wife would have been fatal. He'd have forbidden her seeing me again. He's got the religious view (*he laughs bitterly*)—"Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder," etc.

MANSELL.

But you ought to have divorced your wife all the same, and then carried the girl off.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, of course, I *ought* to. But it would have been no good. She wouldn't have left him. I should never have got her that way—not till his death. She wouldn't go against him openly, she hasn't force enough. You see, she loves him. And so I took the—shortest way.

MANSELL.

What a position! And *now*—

SHERRINGTON.

Now she *must* go away. There's no other way. She *must*. I must take her away, even by force. I want you to help me. That's why I sent for you.

MANSELL.

But what'll happen *then?*

SHERRINGTON.

It's all right *if* she goes. It's the getting her away. I've means, and we shall live abroad. People will call me a scoundrel. I daresay I *am* a scoundrel. When I think of it coolly, I see that I am—but it's life and death for me—and for her!

MANSELL.

But why *shouldn't* she go away with you?

SHERRINGTON.

You don't understand. You don't know her. She *loves* him; it's her sense of duty. It's like tearing up a piece of ivy by the roots. She hasn't force to go, and she *can't* stay.

MANSELL.

But—

SHERRINGTON.

Imagine her position. She's a very exceptional nature. She's not like most of us—common clay. Imagine such a girl trained all her life to be devoted to her father, at the mercy of his whims, brought up in that shut-up atmosphere,

MANSELL.

(*Interrupting*) Not—! you don't mean to say, Sherrington, it's Miss Elwood.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes.

MANSELL.

Good God! well, you are—(*drawing breath in sharply*).

SHERRINGTON.

Go on.

MANSELL.

Well! *That* girl torn between her father and you. I don't wonder you're distracted.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes.

MANSELL.

But why, in Heaven's name? (*in an exasperated voice*). Why? . . .

SHERRINGTON.

Go on.

MANSELL.

I don't understand you, Sherrington. I never did. If you knew all this, if you saw all this, how in Heaven's name could you do it? It's the act of a—well—(*putting his hands in his pockets and shrugging his shoulders*). Well, people would say it was the act of a blackguard! Why, if you loved her, should you sacrifice her like this?

SHERRINGTON.

Because I loved her!

MANSELL.

(*Ironically*) *Because* you loved her!

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, that's the irony of it. It's those we *do* love we sacrifice. We can't help it. It's hunger . . . (*with sudden anger*). That's enough! Accept it or not. Are you going to help me?

MANSELL.

But what can I do?

SHERRINGTON.

I'm not on terms with her father. He distrusts me—naturally. He knows nothing, but he suspects me. Of course I *can* go and call there—but it's like a fortress. But you—You know her aunt, don't you? Weren't your people and hers old friends?

MANSELL.

Well.

SHERRINGTON.

Well—they will be glad to see you, even though you are staying with me.

MANSELL.

Well?

SHERRINGTON.

It may make things easier. It's the worst time,

these few days. . . . Do you understand. By to-morrow night I shall probably *know*.

MANSELL.

How will you know?

SHERRINGTON.

She's going to Exeter to-morrow, with her aunt, shopping. And she'll contrive to see . . . to see . . .

MANSELL.

A doctor?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes.

MANSELL.

My God!

SHERRINGTON.

(*Grimly*) And then, I shall force her to come. It's killing her—this life—she must come. She *must*.

MANSELL.

Do you see her every day?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, every evening, in the wood by the river. It's her only free time. The old man is more and more jealous of her being away, even for an hour. He's tightening his hold. He has no idea of her living her life; it's *his* life she's to live. It's

suffocation. And now, this has come! Mansell, I must get her away.

MANSELL.

Well!

[*He walks to the window, and turns his back on Sherrington. A pause.*

(*Turning round*) How long has this been going on —meeting her, I mean, and—

SHERRINGTON.

Over six months. (*Brusquely*) Don't ask me any more questions, I can't stand them. I'm tortured. (*He takes a pace up and down. In jerks, catching his breath*) Mansell, I love her. I've been possessed by her, and now her eyes make me shudder. She's strained to breaking-point—and I, I've brought this upon her. She's bewildered—she's under two forces—her love for me, and her fear for him. If I don't get her away she'll sink. And if *he* keeps me away from her, as he will, it'll kill her slowly. And these coming months—ah!

MANSELL.

But can't you be reconciled? Can't you make him see that it will kill her? Can't you—

SHERRINGTON.

You don't know him. He's as firm as flint—no, it's not that: he's jealous. He'll never forgive

her. He's all character and moral force. If he discovers it now, I believe the shock of it in her mind, ah . . . !

[*Sherrington throws himself into a chair, and sits staring before him with chin in his hands.*

MANSELL.

(*Sighing*) Well! It all depends, then, on to-morrow.

[*He knocks the ashes out of his pipe.*

SHERRINGTON.

Yes.

[*A ring at the bell is heard.*

SHERRINGTON.

(*Getting up*) Hm'n! A visitor! It may be my wife!

[*He goes to the door and opens it and listens. Voices heard in the hall.*

SHERRINGTON.

I believe it is her.

[*He comes back into the room.*

MARY.

(*Appearing at the door*) Please, sir, there's the lady to see you.

SHERRINGTON.

The lady? What's her name?

MARY.

The lady who came this morning, sir. She didn't give any name.

SHERRINGTON.

The lady who came this morning. Where is she?

MARY.

I told her you were in, sir, and I showed her into the drawing-room, sir.

SHERRINGTON.

Oh! Very well. Thanks. Show her in here when I ring.

MARY.

Yes, sir.

[*Exit.*

SHERRINGTON.

It's her. She's come back.

MANSELL.

Your wife?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes. (*bitterly*). She doesn't waste any time. She's come to force my hand.

MANSELL.

(*Sharply*). Does she know anything about Miss Ellwood?

SHERRINGTON.

No, I don't think so. But she's capable of anything. She knows the Ellwoods. She's been questioning Mary this morning. She's absolutely unscrupulous. I don't know what she mayn't do.

MANSELL.

But what's her attitude? She was in the wrong.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Bitterly*). Oh, *that* doesn't matter. You know her. She wants to force me to take her back, just because it suits her now. She's repented, she says. She's met one of those ultra-Ritualistic priests.

[*Laughs.*

MANSELL.

I see.

SHERRINGTON.

She's as blunt and determined as ever, and she sees no obstacles. I wasn't hard enough on her the other day, and now she's going to bring more pressure to bear. [*He goes towards the bell.*

You'll see presently! I want you to be a witness.

MANSELL.

But—my dear fellow—I . . .

SHERRINGTON.

All right! don't be alarmed. I can't mince

matters now. If I'm not absolutely firm she'll hang about here for weeks. Every hour she stays is dangerous. I must get rid of her. She'll stick at nothing.

[*He rings the bell, and then throws open an inner door on right.*

Go in there for a few minutes, my dear fellow, will you?

[*Mansell goes into inner room. Sherrington shuts the door on him. Sherrington takes a deep breath.*

Enter Mary, showing in Mrs Sherrington, veiled.

[*Mrs Sherrington is dressed in plain, well-cut clothes, of a strictly utilitarian order. She has no charm, but is not bad looking; she wastes no words; her speech is direct, hard, and quite unimaginative.*

SHERRINGTON.

(*Standing motionless by the inner door*) Well! you've come back!

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*Raising her veil*) Lewis—I expected you wouldn't be glad to see me.

SHERRINGTON.

No. I'm not. I told you, last week, it was no use your coming again.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Well, I expected you to say that, Lewis. (*She sits down determinedly in a chair. A pause.*) Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Without moving*) Well.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Lewis, I went away, I know. I know it was very wicked of me.

SHERRINGTON.

You've said all that before.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I know that you've made up your mind against me, but I want you to listen to me, Lewis. I know that from your point of view it's quite natural that you should make up your mind against me.

SHERRINGTON.

Can't you see that it's not a question of my making up my mind. I haven't any feeling left in me. I feel quite dead. I can't feel what I *don't* feel. I don't wish you any harm, Alice, but I can't begin living with you again, and I won't.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

You're alone, and I am alone, Lewis, and I will try to make you a good wife if you'll let me.

SHERRINGTON.

It's no good.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I do wish you'd let me try, Lewis, just for a little. If you didn't like it, I'd go away; I wouldn't say a word.

SHERRINGTON.

No.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Father Aloysius says that we must forgive one another any wrong we've done, and that if I show you I'm truly repentant, that you will come, by-and-by, to a different mind.

SHERRINGTON.

Look here, Alice. I can't argue with you. I don't want to argue with you. I've nothing more to say—nothing.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*With genuine tears in her eyes*) Well, you're treating me very hardly, very cruelly, Lewis. (*She wipes away some tears.*) I know I acted very wrongly. I know I wasn't the wife I ought to have been. And I want to come back.

SHERRINGTON.

And I don't want you to come back. I've told you now that Danby's dead, that I shall give you a third of my money. You can go away and do

whatever you like. You can live in a Catholic settlement.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

A third of the money. [*A silence.*
Is that all you have to say to me, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Nothing more, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

No. It's final. [*A pause.*

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*Vindictively*) There must be somebody else, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

What do you mean?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

There's some other woman.

SHERRINGTON.

No, there isn't. I want to live alone.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

There is. I feel sure there is. There's some other woman.

SHERRINGTON.

No, there isn't. You're quite wrong. I never did love you, and you never loved me. Don't let's have any false pretences, or fresh accusations.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I *know* there's some other woman. I feel there is, Lewis. And that's why you didn't get a divorce. You couldn't. (*Shutting her lips.*) I shall find it all out.

SHERRINGTON.

If there had been some other woman, I *should* have got a divorce; I *should* have wanted to marry her.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I know you're very clever, Lewis, but you can't deceive me. There *is* some other reason. You're not the sort of man to live alone.

SHERRINGTON.

It's no use arguing.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

And I shan't give you up, Lewis. Father Aloysius says I'm not to give you up. I pray every night for both of us. You may repulse me, and repulse me, but I shan't give you up.

SHERRINGTON.

Understand, I shall never live with you again.

[*A pause.*

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*In a softer voice*) I didn't want to quarrel, Lewis. (*She gazes curiously round the room.*) Who have you got with you? You've got somebody staying here, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, Mansell. [*A pause.*

[*Sherrington suddenly goes to the inner door, opens it, and calls "Mansell."*

Enter Mansell. He bows to Mrs Sherrington.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I suppose you've forgotten me, Mr Mansell. Won't you shake hands? [*They shake hands.*

SHERRINGTON.

Mansell, I've called you in to put a close to a useless discussion. I'm sorry to thrust our affairs upon you, but Alice doesn't seem to wish to understand that I don't mean to reopen the past. Alice, I want to say for the last time, with Mansell as witness, that it's quite useless to expect me to do what you ask. We were wretched together, and you left me of your own desire. As I said before, you can have a third of my money on which to lead your own life. I'm going abroad.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

When are you going abroad, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

Next week.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

You said nothing about it to me last week, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

No. I didn't think it necesary.

[*An awkward pause.*

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*After looking round the room curiously*) Well, I see that you want to get rid of me, Lewis, so I shan't stay now.

[*She gets up, and arranges her hat and veil in the glass, deliberately. The two men watch her. An awkward pause.*

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I'm staying at Beaminster with Mrs Fowler. She's taken a house there. Won't you come over and see me, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

I don't see that it's any use, Alice.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Well, good-bye, Lewis. Won't you kiss me?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, I'll kiss you, Alice.

[*She turns her cheek, and he kisses it impassively.*

Good-bye.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Will you drive a little way with me, Mr Mansell? I've got a fly at the door.

MANSELL.

I shall be delighted.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*Going out*) Good-bye, Lewis, for the present.

SHERRINGTON.

Good-bye.

[*He shows them out, Mrs Sherrington going first. As Mansell passes him in the doorway, Sherrington speaks behind his hand.*

SHERRINGTON.

(*Aside*) Be careful.

[*He looks after them and shuts the door.*

(*Coming back into room, and clenching his fists*) My God! (*He goes to the table and pours out wine for himself and drinks.*)

[*He pauses in thought, and while he is putting tumbler on edge of the table mechanically, it slips off and breaks on the floor.*

She and Grace! (*He looks at his watch.*) Four o'clock! One hour to wait!

CURTAIN.

Scene II.

Thursday. The wood by the river. A late October evening, grey and growing dusk. Oak copse wood all round. On right, trunk of river-side oak.

[*Enter Sherrington from right. He keeps looking back anxiously the way he has come. He sits down by the large trunk; then gets up again, listens attentively, and walks hurriedly to entrance, gazes, and then comes slowly back.*

SHERRINGTON.

(*Looking at his watch*) Past five.

[*He takes a note out of his pocket and reads.* "It's not *quite* certain!" (*He stares dully on the ground.*)

Enter Grace from left.

GRACE.

Lewis!

SHERRINGTON.

(*Starting up to meet her*) My sweet! (*He takes her head between his hands and looks into her eyes.*) My darling! (*He whispers in her ear.*)

[*Grace shakes her head sadly.*

GRACE.

He's not quite sure.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Staring at her*) He's not . . . quite sure?

GRACE.

No.

SHERRINGTON.

But he must have said more than that.

GRACE.

He said he couldn't be positive—yet.

SHERRINGTON.

Wouldn't he say anything more than that?

GRACE.

(*In a dull voice*) He said he expects it's so—but he isn't sure.

Oh, Lewis! he isn't sure.

SHERRINGTON.

It is! It is sure! (*He draws a deep breath.*) Ah!

[*He embraces Grace with a sort of violence. She yields herself passively.*

Now we *must* act!

GRACE.

(*Drawing herself away from him, alarmed*) Act!

Oh no, Lewis! What do you mean? (*She stares at him.*)

SHERRINGTON.

(*Taking her hands*) Dearest, listen to me. You know how I love you, Grace. You feel it all through you. You feel you have confidence in me.

GRACE.

(*With large open eyes*) Yes. . . . What are you saying, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

(*With a sort of desperation*) You *feel* I give you strength.

GRACE.

Yes, I do feel it, Lewis, but I feel so confused . . . so strange. It's as though things were going on all round, and I can't catch up with them.

[*She hides her face to prevent herself crying.*

SHERRINGTON.

Darling! look at me. It'll soon be all over. To-morrow we must get right away from here.

GRACE.

To-morrow! Oh no! Lewis!

SHERRINGTON.

Don't you *want* to be with me, alone, at peace?

Somewhere where there are no other people. Last week you said, "Take me away."

GRACE.

Yes, I *did* mean it. Oh, take me away, Lewis, take me away somewhere soon—but not yet.

SHERRINGTON.

(*In a strange voice*) Not yet? (*He groans.*)

GRACE.

Oh, not to-morrow! I can't. Wait a little, Lewis, just a little longer. Only a few more days. And it's not *quite* certain, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

Grace, we must face things, we *must*. You know you belong to me entirely now.

GRACE.

Yes, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

Nobody can come between us now, Grace. I've waited too long. All the torture of these months is killing you. You haven't strength to stand any more. Your father has no *right* over you now.

GRACE.

Oh, you don't understand my father, Lewis. If I could only make you feel what he is to me.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Savagely*) Oh! your father. (*He clenches his hands.*) We must end this. (*He takes a step up and down, controlling himself and speaking with forced gentleness.*) Grace, don't you understand that your father wants to separate us, that he *must* want to? Don't you understand that it's quite hopeless our going on like this? Don't you see that afterwards he will have to accept it, if we can only get away now? When you are stronger you will be able to make him understand it all. You're not strong enough now.

GRACE.

Oh, you don't know my father, Lewis. He *does* love me.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, he does love you. But don't you know how he must hate me? Don't you know how he's always disliked your seeing me? You've never for one minute let him guess the truth—what I am to you—you're afraid of even speaking my name before him. Don't you know that we've always been forced to deceive him—and that now we *can't*.

GRACE.

Yes, I've been very wrong and weak, Lewis. I knew that I should only bring you wretchedness.

SHERRINGTON.

But you haven't! you're my soul, my joy. And

I've brought you this. But now we've got to be strong *together;* you must let me be your strength. Don't you see, don't you feel how happy we shall be directly we're together, directly you get rest. You *must* be strong now, Grace. You *must* come away with me now.

GRACE.

(*Earnestly*) No, Lewis. I can't go. I can't go like that. I must tell them first.

SHERRINGTON.

You *can't.* That will be fatal.

GRACE.

Oh, I must. I don't know how to when I see his face. I lie awake all night, thinking of how I can tell him—and in the morning I can't.

SHERRINGTON.

But don't you see that if you *do* tell him he'll insist on separating us, that to him I've ruined you? Grace, don't you know that that will kill you, and that you can't live without me, and that I *won't* give you up? It's either him or me now, Grace.

GRACE.

Oh, but I shall *make* him understand when I tell him, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

He wants to get you for himself; he wants to shut out everybody and everything. He always did. And he'll keep you from me all the more now. The more he understands, the worse it will be.

GRACE.

But when he understands that you're my life, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

But he *won't*. You can't make him, Grace. He doesn't think that I *ought* to be your life. Don't you see that in his eyes I'm a scoundrel, a blackguard, that I've come behind his back and stolen you from him, and I can't even marry you? Do you think that he'll ever forgive me? He'll think that it's his duty to protect you from me, to shut you away, so that I can't get at you.

GRACE.

But I shan't let myself be shut away, Lewis, when, when—(*she begins to weep*). Oh, I will be stronger. Only give me a little time.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Desperately*) Time! We're wasting time.

GRACE.

You're not angry with me, Lewis? I can't bear to hurt you, and I can't bear to hurt him either.

SHERRINGTON.

(*In a fixed, determined voice*) You must come away, Grace. You must come away to-morrow. You must make some excuse in the morning to go to Minton. I'll be waiting with the trap, this side of the village. And we'll get to London.

GRACE.

To London! Oh, Lewis, don't ask me to go yet. Not to-morrow.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Between his teeth*) Why not to-morrow?

GRACE.

Because it's *not* certain, Lewis. Sometimes I think it's all my fancy. I can't believe it's happened. It's all like a dream, because I've been so weak, so silly to let myself get ill. I don't feel it has happened, Lewis. And that's partly why I *can't* tell my father.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Groaning, and clenching his fists in despair*) Ah-h! Listen to me, Grace. Do you want to drive me mad?

GRACE.

(*Alarmed*) Lewis! what do you mean?

SHERRINGTON.

Well, this is killing me. I've no rest or peace,

now, not one single minute, in all the day; it's all torture. Do you know what agony I'm in all the time, about you?

GRACE.

Yes, I know, Lewis. I keep thinking of that too, in the night time. I keep thinking of you, and him, and how I can't bring you together, because I'm so weak—because I've failed you.

SHERRINGTON.

But you *haven't* failed me, Grace. It's only because you don't see that my way is *the only possible way* for us.

GRACE.

But don't hurry me, Lewis. I *will* be braver, I will try. Only let me have a little longer—to think. Oh, won't you? I shall *see* the way. Sometimes I feel I should be quite strong if you and my father didn't force me.

SHERRINGTON.

(*With desperate calm*) But I'm not forcing you, Grace. I'm only trying to show you what'll happen. Isn't our love strong enough to conquer everything? What does it matter all these people, and all their talk? It's only you and me, you and me, and our love. Don't you feel that you're everything to me?

GRACE.

We must think of those who love us, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Between his teeth*) You mean your father.

GRACE.

And Aunt Dorothea. Oh, Lewis, it's so frightful going away without saying a word to them. They won't understand, they won't *understand*. (*She weeps.*) You don't see me with their eyes, and I'm *living in* them.

SHERRINGTON.

But they'll get over it. It won't be for long. And when they know you're happy again they'll be forced to want you happy. It's you and me now.

GRACE.

You don't know my father, Lewis. He'll never recover from the shock if I go away like that. He won't believe that I *do* love him. He won't *understand it.* It will all seem one hideous deceit.

SHERRINGTON.

But he'll *force* you to give me up. And I *won't* give you up, I won't. You belong to me, Grace. Your child will be my child. He doesn't really love you. He never enters into your feelings.

GRACE.

(*In a suffocated voice*) Oh! if you talk like that, Lewis, I feel I shall kill myself. I can't bear it.

(*Wildly*) You're on one side, and he's on the other, and I don't know how to bring you together. (*Turning away.*)

SHERRINGTON.

There! there! my sweet! (*He takes her head between his hands.*) Look at me! Aren't we together? Won't I do anything in the world now that you ask?

GRACE.

Then don't force me, Lewis. That's why I love you so, and why I came to you, because people have never let me be myself. I'm not able to fight with the people I love—I can't. It's because you've never been angry wiih me that I must have you always. Oh, keep near me, keep near me, even if I am stupid and weak.

[*They embrace.*

SHERRINGTON.

Grace, Grace, won't you do it for me?

GRACE.

Oh, I will do what you want, Lewis. I will. But we must do it together. I shall *come* to see it soon, if it's the right way.

[*A clock strikes the half hour in the distance.*

Oh, what's that? the half hour? Oh, I must go now, I must. He hates me to be out after he wakes up. Don't keep me, Lewis. You'll only make it harder.

SHERRINGTON.

My darling! (*He takes her head between his hands. She looks up at him.*)

GRACE.

It isn't certain, Lewis. I don't *believe* that it's happened. And if it has it'll give me strength, such strength.

SHERRINGTON.

My sweet! you twist my heart!

GRACE.

Kiss me! Good-bye.

[*He embraces her.*

I *must* go. I'm late already. To-morrow at five.

[*She tears herself away from him and goes out. Sherrington takes some steps after her and watches her. Then he walks back to the tree.*

SHERRINGTON.

(*Clenching his hands*) What am I to do? What *am I* to do?

CURTAIN.

ACT II

ACT II

Scene I.

The Drawing-room of Dr Elwood's house. Rather cramped. Furnished somewhat stiffly in Victorian style, and crowded by extra bookcases. Miss Dorothea Elwood is seated talking to Mansell. Miss Dorothea is a calm, white-haired lady of about sixty-five. She always speaks of James in a manner that suggests her horizon is bounded by his wishes. Time—4.40. Door on left at back. Door into conservatory on right.

Miss Dorothea Elwood.

We all take such a pride in the conservatory, though the Doctor isn't naturally very fond of flowers. Old Collins has really quite a genius for arranging them. Such a dear old man! But I should like you to see the conservatory at a better time. Of course most of the plants have done flowering.

Mansell.

I suppose they'll have finished work, directly, the Doctor and Grace.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Yes, they'll be in directly, and the Doctor will be *so* delighted to see you again. He never forgets his old friends though he doesn't make many new ones. (*Patting his hand.*) It's quite a treat to see you again, Frank. We get so few callers. And so your dear father keeps quite well?

MANSELL.

Oh, he keeps wonderfully well, thank you. He's extraordinarily active for a man of his age.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

He always was a wonderfully kind man. I'm sure the things he'd do for everybody, with all his business worries too! And your poor dear mother. (*She sighs.*) He must feel her loss terribly. (*Looking at Mansell*) You've got your mother's eyes, you know, Frank. But you haven't got that sweet smile of hers. Dear dear me, how well I remember the first time I met her. It was at an evening party at the Dickensons. She was wearing a white lace shawl. I thought her the most charming woman I had ever seen. (*She sighs.*)

MANSELL.

And how is the Doctor? Is he as busy as usual?

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Oh yes, he's always hard at work. All these new discoveries, excavations I think they call them, in Syria have interested him so much. He says they prove quite the contrary of what the German professors imagine. You know he keeps quite up with the times, but he's of the old school, and these young archæologists are all going the other way. He's always in controversies with them. I don't understand it myself, but it means a great deal of extra work for him and Grace.

MANSELL.

And how is Grace? I haven't seen her since—let me see. It's four years ago. She must have been nineteen.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Oh, you'll see her directly. She and the Doctor are in there. (*She points to the next room.*) I expect him to ring for tea every minute. (*She looks at her watch.*) Dear me, it's nearly five. They *are* late to-day. I know he's working to catch the post, with proofs or something.

MANSELL.

Grace acts as the Doctor's secretary, then, now.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Oh, she loves to work for her father. It was

her own idea. He says now that he couldn't get on a day without her. She's always so responsive to what he is feeling. She reads all the small print to him, now that his eyes aren't so good as they were. And the Doctor's trained her so that she can find all the references when she's copying. She isn't clever at languages, you know, like him, but she's careful and painstaking.

MANSELL.

Ah! Cissie said last year that she thought that Grace was taking after her mother.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Oh, she did from a child. Poor Helen! She was always thinking of others. (*She sighs.*) Life was such a strain to Helen.

MANSELL.

(*Looking round*) I see the books keep growing.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Yes, they're quite crowding us out. We had to get those two extra bookcases last year, and they filled up at once. I want you to see the Doctor's study before you go, Frank. It's such a nice large room. So airy. I think it's *so* important for him to have an airy room to work in. And such a pleasant view over the river. It's so nice for Grace. She

has a table by the window to work at, so she can see all the green things growing outside.

MANSELL.

And is Grace much altered?

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Oh, she hasn't altered very much, I think. But you won't see Grace at her best, Frank. She's been so pale lately, not at all herself. (*In a confidential tone*) I think the Doctor, you know, works her rather too hard. He's so absorbed with all he's doing that he doesn't notice it. And young girls *do* want a change sometimes. But we hope soon, Grace and I, to go down to Torquay for a fortnight and visit dear Mrs Mason. For the Doctor has been invited by Sir John Everleigh for a stay at Clarendon to see his oriental manuscripts. He hasn't been able to get away yet, he's been so busy, and he always puts things off, but he hopes to go next month. Dear, dear, how long they are to-day! I think if you'll excuse me, Frank, I'll go and remind the Doctor that its past tea-time.

[*She gets up and Exit. Mansell shrugs his shoulders, and gets up and examines the pictures on the walls, etc. A bell rings.*

Re-enter Miss Dorothea.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

I've rung for tea. They've just finished. (*Confi-*

dentially to Mansell) I wouldn't speak much about Mr Sherrington, Frank, if you can help it. Of course the Doctor will ask you where you are staying. But Mr Sherrington is not one of the Doctor's favourites, so we don't often speak of him. I'll tell you later.

[*The Doctor's voice is heard outside.*

Enter Dr Elwood. He is a stout, grey-haired man of about sixty-five, with a large massive head and long beard. Looks rather like a head-master, and speaks with a deep, authoritative voice as though his words were final. Is formally polite. His little coughs and ahems are taken as danger signals by the women.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Advancing to Mansell*) This is quite an unlooked-for pleasure, Mr Mansell. (*They shake hands.*) Quite a pleasure to see you again. I hope you are well.

MANSELL.

Quite well, thank you.

DR ELWOOD.

That's right. Curiously enough I was looking only yesterday at the correspondence you so kindly sent me, in the spring, from your friend at Cairo, Signor Manetti, on the recent explorations in Syria, and I was thinking of addressing some further in-

quiries to him on the subject. But let us speak of yourself. You are staying in the neighbourhood?

MANSELL.

Yes—for a few days.

DR ELWOOD

And where are you putting up? At Minton.

MANSELL.

No. I'm staying with my old college friend, Sherrington.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! (*disapprovingly*) Mr Sherrington! Yes, yes! And what—er, what do you think of the neighbourhood?

MANSELL.

Oh, charming, most charming. I know Exmoor pretty well, but I've never penetrated so far south as this. You've chosen a delightful spot, Dr Elwood, for your retreat.

DR ELWOOD.

Yes, yes, we have nothing to complain of. The air is very salubrious. And we are in reach of Exeter when Dorothea and Grace wish to go shopping. And how is your good father? Quite well, I trust.

MANSELL.

Oh yes, my father keeps remarkably well. Indeed, I think he's stronger than any of us.

Enter Agatha with tea-tray. She puts it on table by Miss Dorothea.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! the fruit of an active and well-spent life.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Bring the kettle, Agatha.

AGATHA.

(*Going out*) Yes, m'm.

[*As Agatha goes out, Grace glides into the room, very quiet and pale. Dr Elwood goes on talking without seeing her entrance.*

DR ELWOOD.

To recur to your friend, Signor Manetti, Mr Mansell, and the recent researches in Syria, do you still keep up your interests in oriental archæology?

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

(*Raising her voice reprovingly*) James! Here's Grace!

DR ELWOOD.

(*Turning round*) Ah! my daughter Grace, Mr Mansell. [*They shake hands.*

You have not seen Grace, Mr Mansell, since she was quite a girl.

MANSELL.

(*Pleasantly*) Four years ago, I believe, Miss Elwood.

GRACE.

(*Smiling faintly*) Yes, it seems quite a long time.

DR ELWOOD.

Well! Grace has blossomed into quite a distinguished orientalist herself, since you met her, Mr Mansell. (*He laughs at his own joke.*) To speak seriously, she has acquitted herself remarkably well, remarkably well in our joint-labours. (*Laying his hand affectionately on Grace's shoulder*) I don't know what I should do without Grace now. She enters into all my plans, and we work side by side, side by side. And those German professors, Dr Müller and Dr Himmel, take a great deal of answering. Don't they, Grace?

GRACE.

(*Trying to smile*) Yes, father.

DR ELWOOD.

But I think we have routed them, Grace and I, together. I think we have.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Come, James! The tea is getting cold.

[*Grace goes to the table.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Blandly*) Then let us come and partake of it, Mr Mansell.

[*They move to the table. Cups are handed, and bread and butter.*

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

And what has Cissie been doing since her engagement with that Captain Butler was broken off? And Cousin Minnie? Hasn't she another little boy?

MANSELL.

Oh, Cissie has gone in a great deal for music lately. Oh, thanks, Miss Elwood.

[*While Mansell is handing Grace bread and butter, Dr Elwood suddenly speaks in a loud voice, behind Grace's back.*

DR ELWOOD.

Grace!

[*Grace starts and lets the plate fall; Mansell tries vainly to catch it.*

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

(*Disturbed*) My dear child! One of the old plates too.

DR ELWOOD.

I'm afraid I startled you inadvertently, my dear child.

[*He drinks some tea.*

[*Grace flushes and looks as though she were going to break down. She stoops down to hide her confusion, and begins picking up the bread and butter.*

MANSELL.

(*Animatedly to cover Grace's confusion, on his knees, helping Grace*) It was my fault entirely! Just like me. I'm so sorry! They used to call me butter fingers at school. [*He hands up the plate.*

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

Oh! it isn't broken! What a good thing! I should have been grieved, for I think it's such a bad omen to break old things. (*Catching sight of Grace.*) Why, Grace! how pale you look, my dear child! You haven't been out all day. I'm sure you ought to go out more. Have you a headache?

GRACE.

Oh no! Aunt Dorothea! I feel quite well.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Well, you don't *look* well, my dear. James, you've been overworking her.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! I'm afraid that Grace may have overtaxed herself a little with my reply to Dr Müller. But we shall have finished to-morrow, Dorcthea; and then, my dear, you must take some rest. [*He pats Grace's head affectionately.*

GRACE.

Yes, father. [*She sits down by her aunt.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Turning to Mansell*) Then I understand you to say, Mr Mansell, that you still keep up your archæological interests?

MANSELL.

Oh yes, ever since I went out to Syria, that year, I've been awfully keen on the whole subject.

DR ELWOOD.

That's right, that's right. It would be a pity for you to let such an interest drop. For the whole field of criticism of the Pentateuch has entered into quite a new phase. Far from disproving the labours of Professor Sayce, as Himmel contends, the last excavations confirm in a remarkable degree the contentions advanced by Mr Hastings and myself as early as 1880. Grace, my dear, would you fetch me the second volume of Schrader's "Bibliothek," the one with the plans?

Miss Dorothea Elwood.

Do let Grace finish her tea, James. She hasn't eaten anything.

Dr Elwood.

(*Kindly*) Never mind then, Grace.

Grace.

Oh, I—I don't want any more, auntie.

[*She gets up and glides out of the room.*

Dr Elwood.

As I have said in my reply to Dr Müller, Mr Mansell, the whole matter is a question of Direct *versus* Indirect testimony. To rely, as the German School does, not on the actual statements found in the inscriptions, but from hypothetical inferences drawn from them, is—is entirely destitute of logic and reason.

Miss Dorothea Elwood.

(*Breaking in*) Won't you have another cup of tea, Mr Mansell?

Mansell.

Oh, thanks!

[*While he is taking the tea Grace enters with a book and hands it to her father.*

Dr Elwood.

(*Taking hold of the book, and patting her hand affectionately*) Thank you, my love, thank you. And

what would you like to do this evening, my dear child?

GRACE.

Oh, I think . . . auntie wants me to read to her.

DR ELWOOD.

Very good, very good. (*Grace goes and sits down by her aunt.*) Do you follow my point, Mr Mansell?

MANSELL.

I quite see your point, Dr Elwood. You mean that the indirect testimony, when taken as evidence, is often not circumstantial.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Pleased*) Precisely, precisely; you have grasped my meaning, That is the advantage of possessing a legal training, Mr Mansell. Now let us take this example.

[*He unfolds a plan from end of the book, and Mansell and he bend over it together.*

Enter Agatha.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

(*Looking up*) Yes, Agatha?

AGATHA.

Please, m'm, Mrs Sherrington has called, and has brought a note for Dr Elwood.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

(*Taking the note*) Mrs Sherrington?

AGATHA.

Yes, m'm.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD

(*Looking at the note*) *Mr* Sherrington, you mean.

AGATHA.

No, m'm, it's a lady.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Mrs Sherrington! It's very odd. (*She goes across the room to the Doctor.*) James, here's a note for you.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Looking at the note*) Give me my glasses, Grace.

[*Grace takes his glasses from the mantelpiece and hands them to him. Dr Elwood puts them on deliberately, and opens and reads the note.*

(*To Agatha*) Ah! Ah! Ask the lady to wait in my study.

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

But the lamp isn't lighted, James.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Taking no notice of the interruption*) Ask the lady to wait in my study.

AGATHA.

Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

MISS DOROTHEA ELWOOD.

(*Nervously*) I must go and see about it.

[*She gets up and bustles out of the room.*

[*All this time and during Dr Elwood's next speeches Grace is standing with a scared face, twisting and untwisting her fingers nervously.*

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! As I was saying, Mr Mansell—you read German, do you not? Very good, very good. Now, if you will glance at the translation of this interesting facsimile of the inscription on the Natabean monolith, you will see that while the text confirms the contention of Müller that the month Nisan, corresponding to our March, *is* one of the Assyrian months, it cannot justify him in his further contention that the gods of the Natabeans are, in fact, the old Assyrian deities. It is an unjustifiable inference, for which we have

absolutely no evidence. That is an example of the German School of criticism! Mr Mansell.

MANSELL.

Quite so, Dr Elwood. A very characteristic example.

Enter Miss Dorothea.

DR ELWOOD.

It cannot justify him, for the reason . . .

[*Miss Dorothea draws Dr Elwood aside and whispers to him; he shows signs of displeasure.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Seeing Mansell rise*) No, don't run away, Mr Mansell, don't run away.

MANSELL.

I fear I must be going, Dr Elwood.

DR ELWOOD.

Well, well, I hope if you really must go that you will not leave the neighbourhood without paying us another visit.

MANSELL.

(*Pleasantly*) Thanks, Dr Elwood; I will.

Miss Dorothea Elwood.

Oh, you must come to lunch, Frank; that will be best. Let me see—would Saturday suit you?

Mansell.

Oh, thanks, I think it would suit me admirably.

Miss Dorothea Elwood.

Where's Grace? She's slipped away somewhere. (*Looking.*) Oh, there she is in the conservatory. (*Calling*) Grace, Grace! Mr Mansell's going.

[*Grace re-appears in conservatory door.*

Miss Dorothea Elwood.

Won't you come through by the conservatory, Frank, and look at my flowers? I should so like you to see the Doctor's study before you go.

Mansell.

Oh, thanks! I should like to take a peep at it, and then I must be getting on. Good-bye, Dr Elwood.

[*Mansell shakes hands with the Doctor and then goes through door on right into conservatory with Miss Dorothea and Grace.*

[*Dr Elwood rings the bell and then appears to be examining the note he has opened.*

Enter Agatha, showing in Mrs Sherrington. The Doctor stands by the mantelpiece. His manner changes from a pleasant to a severe, dry, and harsh manner. He bows formally to Mrs Sherrington.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I daresay you're surprised to see me, Dr Elwood.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! (*Glancing at the note and Mrs Sherrington alternately.*) Oh! Mrs Sherrington. (*Bowing to her.*) Pray sit down.

[*He waves his hand, with formality, to a chair and sits down himself.*

And now what is, what (*coughing*)—er—can I do for you, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I know that it must seem strange, my calling like this—after such a long time, Dr Elwood, but you were always so kind to me before . . . before I left my husband, that I thought I'd ask you to help me.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Clearing his throat*) Ah! Ah! In what way?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Perhaps you sided with Lewis, Dr Elwood. I

know I didn't treat him well. I chose to leave him and went away from him. I don't say I didn't.

DR ELWOOD.

Your family differences have nothing whatever to do with me, Mrs Sherrington. I do not—er—take sides in such matters.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

But you must see Lewis often, Dr Elwood, and I'm sure he's given you his side of the matter.

DR ELWOOD.

Mr Sherrington and I are on terms of—er—we are near neighbours, and I have not inquired into the rights and wrongs of your—er—separation. And your husband has not given me his confidence.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Well, I want to tell you, Dr Elwood, first of all, how very, very wretched I am, and to ask you to use your influence over Lewis.

DR ELWOOD.

I have no influence over your husband, Mrs Sherrington—none whatever.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Oh, I'm sure, if you would intercede, Dr Elwood,

he would listen to you. I know it would help me, Dr Elwood. And Lewis always had such a high opinion of your judgment. He's no judgment himself, Dr Elwood, and never had.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Holding up his hand*) I cannot be a party to any recriminations, Mrs Sherrington. Understand that. I should require to hear both sides of the case, and, as I say, your husband has not given me his confidence in the matter.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Oh, I don't want to make any recriminations, Dr Elwood. I haven't come here for that. I only want to tell you my position, and ask if you, as a clergyman and an old neighbour, can see your way to help me.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! (*clearing his throat*). Well, Mrs Sherrington, I can make no promises, but anything you may wish to say I will listen to, and most carefully weigh.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*Settling herself a little less rigidly*) I had to come to you, Dr Elwood, and ask for your help. I've so few friends, and I'm sure that you will help me. And I want everybody's help. (*A slight pause.*) And then I have another reason for coming to you.

DR ELWOOD.

And what is the nature of that reason, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I'm coming to that directly, Dr Elwood. I'll speak about myself first.

[*Dr Elwood taps the desk with his spectacle-case.*

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Soon after I married Lewis, I was very unhappy indeed, very wretched, Dr Elwood. He never did anything I wanted him to do, he didn't listen to anything I said, and he was most extravagant with his money. [*Dr Elwood makes a gesture.*

No, I'm not bringing any accusations against Lewis, Dr Elwood. I only want to make it clear to you how it was that I went away from him. I made up my mind to go away, Dr Elwood, since I couldn't influence him in the slightest, and I went away. People said that Mr Danby and I agreed to go away together to the Continent, but that was only half true. Mr Danby had been most kind to me in my great trouble. He used to call and bring me books that were favourites of his, and he always was very sympathetic over the extravagant way Lewis went on—throwing away his money on people who didn't thank him, and only laughed behind his back. But I *did* go away, Dr Elwood, and now I see that I was very wrong and I ought

to have stopped and made Lewis a good wife. Father Aloysius has shown me that I ought to have tried to get Lewis under my influence. But I don't know if I ever should. He's so very changeable. [*An awkward pause.*

Well, I went away to Bruges. And after a month Mr Danby came over to see me, and he agreed to give up his house in London and come and live with me. Yes, I know it was wrong, and that God has punished me by Mr Danby's death this year. Father Aloysius says it was a great sin. But I *have* truly repented, Dr Elwood, and now I want to come back to Lewis.

[*She puts her handkerchief to her eyes.*

[*A pause.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*With deliberation*) And your husband does not wish to resume married life with you again, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

No, and that's why I want you to help me, Dr Elwood. I want you to try and make Lewis see that it would be the best thing for both of us, Dr Elwood. It would be the best thing for *me*. I have very few friends in the world, though Mrs Fowler has been as kind as a friend can be—and I'm sure it would be the best thing for Lewis. I shouldn't treat him the same way again, Dr Elwood. I should try my best and make him happy. I really would. (*Genuine tears stand in her eyes.*) And

I'm sure he wants somebody to look after him, living all alone there in that solitary house, with only servants. And then there's his money. If he's been going on spending it as he used to do, he'll soon be penniless. I'm sure *you* think it a sensible plan, Dr Elwood.

DR ELWOOD.

And have you put this view of the case to your husband personally, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Yes, but I want everybody to bring their influence to bear on him. And I don't see why I should take his refusal as final. I don't mean to. Father Aloysius says that it's my duty to be reconciled with him. But there's another reason why you should help me, Dr Elwood—on account of your daughter, Grace, and that's partly why I've come to you.

DR ELWOOD.

My daughter, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Yes, your daughter, Grace.

[*She closes her mouth ominously.*

DR ELWOOD.

I fail to understand what my daughter has to do

with the domestic affairs of you and your husband, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Well, I don't want to make any unpleasantness, especially after the kind way in which you've listened to me, Dr Elwood; but people *are* talking about your daughter Grace and Lewis.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Fixing her with a stare*) What people?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

The villagers.

DR ELWOOD.

The villagers! Will you be so good as to inform me what *are* these—these rumours?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

I don't believe them myself, Dr Elwood, but I think you ought to know—of course you're the last person likely to hear of it—that Lewis and your daughter meet one another secretly in Tor Wood.

DR ELWOOD.

Who is your informant for this, for this—er—statement?

Fitz Memorial Library
Endicott Junior College

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Parsons.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Coughing*) Parsons? Parsons?

MRS SHERRINGTON

The bailiff at Allington Court

DR ELWOOD

The bailiff at Allington Court? I do not know the man.

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Parsons mentioned it to Mrs Fowler's groom, and Mrs Fowler thought it only right to give me the report for what it was worth. I don't believe myself, Dr Elwood, that your daughter Grace would do anything against your approval—but I think that it's very likely Lewis has acted foolishly. He's weak. I'm sure you see yourself, Dr Elwood, that it's better not to have anything of the sort whispered about in everybody's interests.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Speaking cautiously*) I pay very little attention, at any time, Mrs Sherrington, to stupid or malicious gossip, but I shall, naturally, in view of your request, give Grace the opportunity of contradicting this—

er—rumour. Have you anything else you wish to add, Mrs Sherrington?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

Only that I do hope, Dr Elwood, that you'll take an opportunity of seeing Lewis soon and talking to him. I know I've no special claim on your kindness, but Mrs Fowler tells me that you hold the Catholic view on Divorce. I do hope that your words will weigh with Lewis: I'm sure they ought to. And now I won't keep you any longer, Dr Elwood. I can see you're busy. [*Mrs Sherrington rises.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Rising*) Well, Mrs Sherrington, as I have said, I can make you no promise in the matter. I may have, possibly I shall have, an occasion of seeing your husband shortly with reference to—er—quite a different matter, and—er—should I find a fitting opportunity—I might—I might—I say, further your views. I can say no more at present. (*Opening the door, and showing her out.*) Are you staying in the neighbourhood?

MRS SHERRINGTON.

(*Going out*) Oh yes, Dr Elwood, at Beaminster.

[*Their voices are heard in the hall; the outer door bangs heavily; Dr Elwood's voice is heard calling loudly.*

DR ELWOOD.

Grace, Grace! Come down!

Re-enter Dr Elwood. He is muttering to himself, and frowning. He stands by the mantelpiece, nodding his head.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Aloud*) A very determined and probably unscrupulous woman! [*Enter Grace.*

GRACE.

(*In a fluttering voice*) Yes, Father.

DR ELWOOD.

Shut the door, my dear child.

[*Grace shuts the door, and stands, pale and startled, by it.*

DR ELWOOD.

I have just received a visit, Grace, from a lady, Mrs Sherrington.

GRACE.

(*In a whisper*) Mrs Sherrington. . . .

DR ELWOOD.

Yes, Mrs Sherrington. She has reappeared here

quite unexpectedly. I need not refer now to the painful circumstances in which she left the neighbourhood. It is sufficient that she has returned, and she wishes to be reconciled with her husband.

GRACE.

(*With a gasp*) With her husband. . . .

DR ELWOOD.

Yes. She has driven over from Beaminster to ask me to intercede if possible with her husband, that she may resume again the duties of married life.

GRACE.

Mrs Sherrington . . . asked you . . . father?

DR ELWOOD.

Yes. She has of course the Church's support and teaching on her side, if she is truly repentant. And in that case her husband ought not to repulse her. But you know my opinion of Mr Sherrington—that I wish this family to have as little to do with him as possible. So I am all the more grieved and concerned, Grace, to hear from Mrs Sherrington that there are malicious rumours in the village concerning you.

GRACE.

(*Gasping*) Rumours—father—about me!

DR ELWOOD.

Yes. I am led to conclude, my dear child—if Mrs Sherrington is correctly informed—that you have continued to meet Mr Sherrington in spite of my wishes to the contrary.

GRACE.

(*In gasps*) Yes, father. I mean . . . I do . . . meet him.

DR ELWOOD.

My dear child! this disregard of my wishes distresses me very much.

GRACE.

I wanted to tell you . . . father, that . . . I want to meet him . . . sometimes . . . and that he is a friend (*she stops*) . . . whom I . . . care for.

DR ELWOOD.

My dear child, Mr Sherrington is a married man, and such friendships with girls of your age are *impossible*. He is a man of no moral principle. I dislike the man—I have reason to dislike him—and I always shall dislike him. He is not to be trusted, Grace. It is most painful for me to have to re-open the subject, but I am convinced that it is *he* who is

to blame in the matter. Mr Sherrington is a man of considerable knowledge of the world, and he must have known very well that by his conduct he is exposing you to highly injurious and discreditable gossip.

GRACE.

No, father, you don't . . . understand. I want to—see him.

DR ELWOOD.

I am quite convinced, Grace. But I am not surprised that he has acted in an underhand manner. Even if he were not a married man, Grace, I should refuse my sanction to your continuing in any friendly relations with him. You have acted injudiciously, my dear child, but you must trust to my judgment and my affection for you when I say that Mr Sherrington is not the sort of man that any father who cared for his daughter's happiness could ever welcome to his house. His own marriage has been an unhappy one—for which no doubt he is only partly to blame. But Mrs Sherrington's story indeed confirms my opinion of his character.

GRACE.

(*In a low voice*) You don't—understand him, father, you are so—hard on him. You must let me tell you what (*she gasps*)—what . . . he . . . is to me.

DR ELWOOD.

Grace, understand it is *impossible*. You will cause me the gravest unhappiness, my dear child, if you persist in — er — this feeling. If you value my peace of mind——

GRACE.

(*Interrupting*) Oh, father! I do love you. I . . . can't . . . tell you, but I want . . . to make . . . you understand.

DR ELWOOD.

My dear child, I am *not* angry with you. I quite understand all about it. Do not imagine that I expect you to feel otherwise at present. Time is needed. But as regards any further intercourse with Mr Sherrington, I have made up my mind. It is out of the question. (*He takes a step or two away.*) I shall speak to your Aunt Dorothea to-night, and I advise you to confide in her. But I shall not allude to it again unless circumstances compel me.

[*A voice is heard calling "Grace, Grace."*

There is your aunt calling you.

[*Grace raises her head, struggling with herself to speak.*

GRACE.

Father, I *want* . . .

DR ELWOOD.

It will be better for everybody if Mrs Sherrington be reconciled to her husband.

Enter Aunt Dorothea.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Grace, my dear! Why, James, your lamp is smoking!

CURTAIN.

SCENE II.

Room in Sherrington's house, as before. Lamps lighted. Sherrington is sitting trying to read, and smoking. He throws the paper aside, and gets up and takes a few steps. Noise in hall. Enter Mansell in hat and coat.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Anxiously*) Well?

MANSELL.

(*With brusque exasperation*) The position's worse.

SHERRINGTON.

Worse?

MANSELL.

(*Taking off his gloves and coat, while talking*) There's only one thing to be done, and you must do it at once—without waiting an hour. (*He throws his coat on the back of a chair.*) You must go to her father, and tell him everything. You must get him to see that it's for her that you came. If you go on like this it will be a matter of her sanity.

SHERRINGTON.

Her sanity?

MANSELL.

(*Taking out his pipe and filling it*) She can't bear any more. She's strained to the breaking point. Something will give way. She's not quite normal.

[*Sherrington stares at him.*

MANSELL.

I've had a certain amount of experience of the breaking point in people, and I tell you she's near the border line.

SHERRINGTON.

The border line?

MANSELL.

Yes.

SHERRINGTON.

But what's happened? What's happened?

MANSELL.

Terrible old man he is! Sees nothing but his own point of view all the time; and you're right, she's suffocated.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Exasperated*) But what's happened, what's happened?

MANSELL.

(*Gravely, watching Sherrington*) Your wife turned up when I was there.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Staring at him*) My wife!

MANSELL.

Yes. She's set the whole thing going. You've no time to lose.

SHERRINGTON.

Go on quick.

MANSELL.

We were at tea in the drawing-room, and the old man was boring me fearfully with the Syrian inscriptions, and Miss Elwood was there, listening all the time, like a ghost. But *he* didn't notice anything.

SHERRINGTON.

Go on! Go on!

MANSELL.

Well, a maid came in and said that Mrs Sherrington wanted to see him. I felt that I ought to clear out. But Icouldn't keep my eyes off Miss Elwood's face—it was . . . haunting.

SHERRINGTON.

Go on.

MANSELL.

Well, Miss Dorothea carried me off to see the conservatory. At last I heard the front door bang. I heard him calling in the passage, "Grace, Grace, come down!" I could see the old lady wanted to get rid of me, but I went on chatting till I felt at last that in decency I couldn't stay any longer, and I was in the hall, going out, when the drawing-room door opened, and *she* came out.

SHERRINGTON.

Who?

MANSELL.

Miss Elwood. And her face was like a sheet.

SHERRINGTON.

My God! did she see my wife?

MANSELL.

No, I don't think so. I don't think that Elwood's

got hold of more than part of the truth. Old Elwood wouldn't have let her go so quickly. But there's only one thing for you to do now—you must have it all out with Elwood. If your wife isn't on the track now, she will be directly. You must go straight to him, and you mustn't leave him, Sherrington, till you've got it into his head that *in her condition* any more strain may be fatal.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, yes, you're right. My God! my wife!

MANSELL.

Forget your wife now! You see if Elwood merely thinks it's a sentimental love she has for you, if he doesn't know the whole truth, he'll torture her unconsciously—and the whole position will grow more horrible for her. And she hasn't strength to tell him—I could see it in her face. She's got a look of—of—horror—as though she were struggling with something. You'd better go at once.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Mechanically*) Yes, yes, at once.

MANSELL.

(*Taking Sherrington's hands earnestly*) My dear fellow, forgive me this brutal way of telling you.

I know what you're feeling. But you must try now to break down his defences, you must efface yourself—anything ; you must get her *condition* into his head. She can do *nothing*.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, yes. You're right. I see, I see. (*He paces up and down nervously.*) My wife !

MANSELL.

The position can't be worse than it is now. You must take it right out of her hands.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Automatically*) Yes. Right out of her hands.

MANSELL.

There's no other way. He'll terrorise her else.

SHERRINGTON.

(*In a threatening voice*) What do you mean ? Damn you, Mansell.

[*Mansell looks at him apprehensively.*

Do you think I'm going to have her terrorised by him ? Do you think she and her child are going to be his—at his mercy ? Do you think that my love will stand that—I'll—I'll—drag her away from him.

MANSELL.

(*Laying his hand imploringly on Sherrington's arm*) Don't go in *that* mood, my dear fellow! or you'll ruin everything. You'll make it impossible for her. She'll be torn into two halves between you, and she can't stand it.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Putting his hands to his head*) Grace! Grace!

[*Recovering himself and speaking dully.*

No, you're right. I'm going for her. I really wasn't thinking of myself, but something seemed to —to—break.

MANSELL.

(*Soothingly*) Yes, yes, I know. Don't you see old Elwood doesn't *understand?* He's outside it all—but he must have some love for her—you must play on that.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, I will, I will, my dear fellow. Thanks, thanks awfully for what you've said. *You* understand, but—

MANSELL.

I'll go myself later on, if you like, when he's had time to think, and drive it home to him. But you'd better go now; it will make more impression on him. Before he stiffens—

SHERRINGTON.

I will. I'll just go upstairs for a minute. (*He goes to the door, pauses.*) I'll—(*he goes out abruptly*).

MANSELL.

(*Sighing*) Well! well! I wish *I* saw the end of it. (*He takes up the paper, glances at it, and throws it down.*)

[*He looks at his watch and goes out.*

[*A pause.* (*Voices in the hall. Noise of outer door shutting. Re-enter Sherrington with hat and gloves. He goes to bureau and scribbles a note—puts it in envelope and touches the bell, then sits still with note in hand, thinking.*)

Enter maidservant.

SHERRINGTON.

Mary, I may be out some little time; Mr Mansell will be in presently. Serve dinner at seven anyway, and don't wait for me if I'm not back.

MARY.

Very well, sir. [*Exit.*

[*Sherrington gets up, goes to the lamp and turns it down, paces up and down.*

[*A tapping is heard on the window; Sherrington starts, goes to the window, and opens it. Grace comes in.*

SHERRINGTON.

Grace! you've come!

GRACE.

Hush! I had to; just for a minute! Oh, Lewis, Lewis! (*She sobs.*)

SHERRINGTON.

My darling! my darling! I know, I know all about it. It'll be all right soon.

GRACE.

(*Clinging to him*) Oh, Lewis! your wife! why didn't you tell me she might come?

SHERRINGTON.

Grace! I didn't know *what* she'd do?

GRACE.

(*In a hollow voice*) Oh, she's made it so much worse now.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Soothing her*) Hush! Hush! there!

GRACE.

She has such a hard staring look in her eyes. (*In a sort of whisper*) Lewis! I believe she *guesses*.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Taken aback*) She didn't see you?

GRACE.

I was on the landing, but she didn't look up. Then I had to go down when father called me. (*In a broken voice*) Lewis, I don't feel I've the same right to you now, after what father said about her.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Through his teeth*) What did she tell him?

GRACE.

She begged him to—to bring you both together. And Lewis—she—she told him that there was gossip about us in the village.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Enraged*) D—n her! What else did she say?

GRACE.

(*In a dazed way*) Oh, I don't know what she said. But father believed her—he'd believe anything about you. And now I *can't* tell him, I *can't*. I don't feel I can *make* him see anything now—not yet—not yet.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Soothing her*) There! There! (*He keeps her for some moments in his embrace—suddenly and sharply.*) Grace, I'm going to see your father now, and tell him everything.

GRACE.

No, you mustn't, Lewis, you mustn't. Not *now!*

SHERRINGTON.

(*In an inflexible, obstinate voice*) I must.

GRACE.

(*Terrified*) No, Lewis. No.

SHERRINGTON.

(*More firmly*) Yes.

GRACE.

Lewis! don't go! don't! He won't *believe* it, he won't *believe* it!

[*She gazes at him with a sort of dumb terror during his next words.*

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, Grace, it's got to come. Your father's strong; but I'm stronger. I've let things drift too long, because you begged and prayed me to. But

there'll be no life, no hope, nothing for you or for me. It'll all be blackness. I'm going to fight.

GRACE.

(*With a gasp*) But he won't believe it—he won't *believe* it!

SHERRINGTON.

It'll all be over this evening—I'll force him (*in a voice hoarse with anger*). I'm not going to be beaten by them. I'm not going to leave you at their mercy. You're my wife, Grace. *She* isn't. (*Controlling himself.*) And there's only one thing you've got to think of now, Grace, one sacred thing!

GRACE.

(*In a frightened whisper*) What's that, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

(*Taking hold of her*) You've got to think of our child. Don't you see that you *must* think of nothing else night or day? You've got to live with *that!*

GRACE.

(*In a strange voice*) Yes, Lewis. (*Then in a whisper*) But is it *certain*, Lewis?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, it *is* certain! darling. We've got to act on that.

GRACE.

(*In a hushed voice*) Yes, Lewis. (*She suddenly reels and catches hold of the table.*)

SHERRINGTON.

(*Catching hold of her, anxiously*) What is it? you're ill?

GRACE.

(*Closing her eyes, and faintly*) Only a little giddy.

SHERRINGTON.

You're ill, and I've brought all this on you. (*Brokenly*) My sweet!

GRACE.

(*She opens her eyes and smiles at him*) It's nothing, Lewis. I feel all right now.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Supporting and watching her*) You're sure?

GRACE.

Quite sure! quite, quite sure!

[*He takes her to the sofa and embraces her, then he rises.*

SHERRINGTON.

Now I *must* go—at once—you must stay here. Oh, it's for you, believe that, Grace dearest. You can't go back with me. I shall tell your father that you're here.

GRACE.

Yes, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

It'll make him realise better *why* you came to me—that you *had* to come to me.

GRACE.

Yes, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

Promise me you won't stir till we come back and fetch you. I shall come back with him or with your Aunt Dorothea.

GRACE.

No, Lewis. I won't stir.

SHERRINGTON.

Promise me that you won't go away till I come. Promise.

GRACE.

No, Lewis, I won't go away. I'll wait.

SHERRINGTON.

Promise!

GRACE.

I promise, Lewis.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Looking at her*) You're changed! You don't seem the same, Grace.

GRACE.

Oh no, Lewis, I'm quite the same. Oh, hold me a little while before you go. (*Smiling at him.*)

LEWIS.

My God! how I love you. (*Folds her in his arms, embraces her, and then looking at her, says*), Grace! it'll end all this torture. You *do* believe in me?

GRACE.

Yes, Lewis, I believe in you.

LEWIS.

You *do* believe it's all for the best?

GRACE.

Yes, Lewis. (*Suddenly pushing him away.*) Go, now, go! Go! (*She stands by the table leaning on it.*) Go.

LEWIS.

I shall tell Mary not to disturb you. (*Goes to the door and pauses—makes a step back.*)

GRACE.

Don't come back, Lewis. (*In a faltering voice*) Go!

[*He looks at her for a second, pauses, and goes out, shutting the door.*

[*Grace looks at the door, turns her eyes to the window, and then all round the room. Voices heard outside. She listens. The front door is heard shutting. Grace starts, then wanders slowly round the room, touching things in a dazed way, till she gets to the window. She fumbles at the handle, undoes the door, stands on the sill, and turns her head dumbly to and fro.*

GRACE.

Lewis! [*She disappears into the night.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III

ACT III

Dr Elwood's study: a large room, with French windows at back. Writing-table on left near window, with two candles burning. On right is another writing-table with the Doctor's desk, piled round with books. Reading-lamp over desk. Book-cases and bookshelves cover the walls. Classical busts on mantelpiece. The whole atmosphere is that of a scholar absorbed in study. Furniture simple and shabby. Time—6.30.

[*Dr Elwood is seated a this desk, writing. He gets up and goes to the shelves, and brings to his desk a large volume. He searches for, and finds a page, and holds it near to the lamp.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Coughing*) Ah, ah! This small type! (*He puts down the book and wipes his glasses, then puts them on again, and re-examines the page.*) Ah! ah! (*He shakes his head, puts the book down, and, going to the door, opens it and calls*) Grace . . . Grace! (*He goes back to desk and sits down.*)

[*Aunt Dorothea's voice is heard. She appears in the doorway.*

AUNT DOROTHEA.

What is it, James?

DR ELWOOD.

Isn't Grace in yet?

AUNT DOROTHEA.

She won't be long, James.

DR ELWOOD.

Where has she gone?

AUNT DOROTHEA.

She's gone to the village.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Testily*) She's very late. Tell her I want her to read to me, Dorothea, directly she comes in.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Yes, James. [*Exit.*

[*Dr Elwood goes on writing. He puts his pen down again and wheels his chair half round and gets up.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Muttering*) Perhaps it is quoted by Lightfoot. (*He goes to the shelves, and is taking down another book,*

when a ring is heard, and then voices in hall. He listens, then carries the book to his desk and opens it.)

Enter Aunt Dorothea.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

James, Mr Sherrington has called to see you. He says it's important.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Displeased*) Mr Sherrington! Tell him I shall be obliged if he will call to-morrow, in the morning. I cannot see him now.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

He says it's very important, James.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Raising his voice emphatically*) Tell him I cannot see him now.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Very well, James.

[*She goes out. Voices heard in hall. Dr Elwood takes up his pen and writes. Re-enter Aunt Dorothea.*

AUNT DOROTHEA.

James, I think you'd better see him. He says it's about Grace.

[*Elwood taps on his desk in thought.*

DR ELWOOD.

Very well, Dorothea. Ask him to come in here.

[*Aunt Dorothea goes out and re-enters, showing in Sherrington. Dr Elwood remains seated. Exit Aunt Dorothea, after glancing nervously at the two men.*

DR ELWOOD.

Mr Sherrington, since you insist on seeing me in spite of my message, I will ask you to be as brief as possible. (*Pointing to a chair*) Pray, sit down.

[*Sherrington sits down.*

You say you have some urgent communication to make to me concerning my daughter Grace. What is it?

SHERRINGTON.

(*Firmly*) I have, Dr Elwood. I have things to say that will be painful for you to hear. I have come here with the object of making a confession.

DR ELWOOD.

A confession.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, a confession. And I must ask you to prepare yourself for news of a kind that you cannot possibly expect.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Breathing hard between his teeth*) I am not so sure, Mr Sherrington, that your mission may not have been partly anticipated by a visitor who has but lately left me. And I am quite aware, Mr Sherrington, that you *have* some very discreditable conduct to give me your explanation of.

SHERRINGTON.

I'm afraid, Dr Elwood, that you must prepare yourself for news of a far more serious nature than my wife has probably given you this afternoon.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Shifting uneasily in his chair, and staring hard at Sherrington*) You are aware, then, of your wife's errand to me? and so you hasten here to make your "confession," as you call it.

SHERRINGTON.

I can see from your words, Dr Elwood, that my wife has called on you to tell you, among other things, that your daughter Grace and I have been much together of late. But she has not told you,

probably, that Grace and I are on terms of the greatest possible intimacy.

DR ELWOOD.

On terms of the greatest possible intimacy! . . .

SHERRINGTON.

Yes.

DR ELWOOD.

Intimacy! What do you mean?

SHERRINGTON.

I mean . . . the terms on which a man possesses the woman he loves.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Rising from his chair and breathing heavily*) Possesses! You are an unprincipled scoundrel! Mr Sherrington.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Earnestly*) Pray sit down, Dr Elwood. I have a far more serious confession to make to you, and you must prepare yourself for a worse shock.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Sinking down heavily into his chair*) A worse shock. . . .

SHERRINGTON.

Your daughter, Dr Elwood—(*he pauses*)—(*in a choked voice*) your daughter,—is, is—likely, likely to. (*He stops.*)

DR ELWOOD.

(*In suppressed fury, speaking fast*) What about my daughter, Mr Sherrington? What about her?

SHERRINGTON.

(*In a husky voice*) Is—she may become a mother.

DR ELWOOD.

What?

SHERRINGTON.

She may . . . become a mother.

DR ELWOOD.

Mother . . . a mother! What do you *mean?*

SHERRINGTON.

She may . . . have a child, Dr Elwood.

DR ELWOOD.

A child! . . . you . . . *libertine.*

SHERRINGTON.

I have much to say, and I entreat you to command

yourself as far as possible, and listen to me. I come here for Grace's sake.

DR ELWOOD.

You come here for Grace's sake! you . . . *libertine.*

SHERRINGTON.

There is nothing that you can call me that I have not called myself. From your point of view, I *have* ruined Grace's life. But it is not her future that I am thinking of now. It is much more serious. It is the present. It is Grace's *necessity,* her *state of mind.*

DR ELWOOD.

Grace's necessity! You should have thought of that before, you, you scoundrel. . . . A mother! (*He gasps, on the verge of an outbreak.*)

SHERRINGTON.

I entreat you for your daughter's sake to listen to me.

DR ELWOOD.

A mother! (*He gets up and turns his back on Sherrington. His shoulders are seen to shake. Then he turns round.*) Mr Sherrington, you are an unprincipled scoundrel, by your own confession; and you have the audacity now to come here, and talk of my daughter's *necessity!* I cannot deal with you

now, but I will at another opportunity. Leave the house.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Sitting still*) No, I will not leave your house, Dr Elwood, till you have listened to what I have got to say. It is graver than you can guess. It is Grace's *state of mind.*

DR ELWOOD.

I will not listen to you any more! It is not *necessary.* As to my daughter's state of mind, I will look after her myself. Leave the house immediately.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Breathing fast*) No, I will not leave your house. Dr Elwood, I entreat you to listen. It is for Grace's safety, for the safety of her child.

DR ELWOOD.

If you do not leave my house, Mr Sherrington, I will have you ejected. (*He advances to the door.*)

SHERRINGTON.

(*Getting up and placing himself against the door.*) (*Furiously*) *Will* you listen to me, Dr Elwood? I ask you not for my sake, but for Grace's sake. And it will not serve your purpose to have me ejected.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Between his teeth*) We will see about that, Mr Sherrington. (*He goes to the bell, and rings.*)

SHERRINGTON.

Listen to me, Dr Elwood! It is quite useless. Grace is now with me. She is in my house.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Taken aback*) Grace in *your* house! (*He sinks down heavily in his chair.*)

Enter Agatha.

AGATHA.

Did you ring, sir?

[*A pause. Agatha stands irresolutely while Dr Elwood glares at her. She begins backing out, and shutting the door.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Raising his voice*) Agatha!

AGATHA.

(*Re-appearing*) Yes, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

Has Miss Grace returned yet?

AGATHA.

No, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! Tell Collins to harness the pony-trap at once.

AGATHA.

Yes, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Raising his voice*) At once!

AGATHA.

Yes, sir.

[*She goes out and shuts the door.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Fixing his eyes on Sherrington*) You say Grace is in your house.

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, she is. And nobody shall take her away from me till you and I have come to an arrangement, Dr Elwood.

DR ELWOOD.

An arrangement! *What* arrangement?

SHERRINGTON.

That is what I have come here for. Now if you will listen to me, Dr Elwood, I will explain what you cannot possibly understand.

DR ELWOOD.

Go on, and be as brief as possible.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Beginning in a low husky voice*) Dr Elwood, I admit that I've wronged you, and that you have every right to hate and detest me for bringing this upon Grace. I admit that I am wholly to blame, criminally to blame, if you like. But Grace loves me, and has given herself to me, and I am and will always be responsible for her. That is why I've come to you now, as one man to another, to say we two *must* act together. She can't stand any more strain, and her mind may give way. However much you detest me we *must* make her believe now that she's done no wrong, and that all will come right. By remaining utterly hostile to me you will only endanger *her*. It is imperative that we should now act together, or she may sink.

DR ELWOOD

Mr Sherrington, you are a seducer, a common seducer, but no doubt you are now as anxious to undo the wrong you have done as you were eager to commit it. You are absolutely unprincipled, but not altogether heartless. I shall not, however, require any help from you in looking after my daughter. The sooner you disappear and trouble her no more, the better it will be for everybody. I

shall take my daughter home myself from your house, and treat her with all the care I have no doubt her condition requires. But I cannot ever have anything more to do with you. Understand that.

SHERRINGTON.

But you don't understand, Dr Elwood, what her condition is. Her brain is utterly confused. She is in terror; and she must be soothed and supported by us both. She looks upon me as her husband, as her child's father. You cannot undo that. I tried to separate her from you, and I found that was fatal. That is why I came to you. She loves you, but she's given herself to me. We are both in her life, both now indispensable to her peace of mind. If you try and separate us now, it will kill her, no matter how excellent your intentions may be.

DR ELWOOD.

I think, Mr Sherrington, that in your tardy fit of repentance you are led to exaggerate my daughter's condition of mind. If you now feel remorse, that is what you ought to feel; for you have acted without conscience, utterly unscrupulously, thinking only of your pleasure, caring nothing about the misery you must bring upon others. In any case I will question my daughter myself, and be guided by my own opinion, and not by yours.

SHERRINGTON.

But you fail to understand me, Dr Elwood. I am not thinking of myself. Your daughter is in a distraught condition. She is *not herself*, Dr Elwood. She has a sort of terror fixed in her brain that you will separate us, and forbid her to see me. It is that that is preying on her mind, that and her deceiving you. It isn't enough for you to forgive her. She is in deadly fear that she cannot bring you and me together. It is her condition that is alarming. You *must* assure her that she shall see me and be with me whenever I come to see her, and that I *shall* be with her. That is all the arrangement I ask for, for her safety. That is enough for me—and that we must be appearing to act together, no matter what we feel.

DR ELWOOD.

I have given you my answer, Mr Sherrington, and I can add nothing further. You cannot undo what you have done. You have seduced my daughter from her peaceful life, and ruined her happiness, and brought this upon her. She was utterly and entirely happy and contented with me before you troubled her, and she can have nothing further to do with you now. Having done your best to ruin her, you have no claim whatsoever now to protect her. In the eyes of all honest men you have acted in a detestable manner, and you have forfeited any right to be considered. I shall not consider you in

any way, I warn you, unless I am obliged. For the present at least you can do nothing better but efface yourself, and leave Grace in peace.

[*He gets up and rings the bell.*

SHERRINGTON.

I entreat you, Dr Elwood, not to let your just anger and your hatred of me carry you to this length. You will kill her. (*In growing exasperation*) Do you think I should come here and warn you, unless I was impelled to do so by my fear about Grace? Even if I *am* a detestable character and have destroyed her future, that has nothing to do with the point. It is Grace—her overwrought state—that I entreat you to consider. You are her father, and you must think not of me, or of yourself, or of anything whatsoever except her danger. I fear for her sanity. In her condition any fresh shock may be fatal. She is bewildered, outside herself. Put yourself and me aside, Dr Elwood; believe what I say. Any doctor will tell you the same.

DR ELWOOD.

I have given you my answer, Mr Sherrington; I will see my daughter, and judge for myself.

Enter Agatha.

AGATHA.

Yes, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

Is the pony trap ready?

AGATHA.

Please, sir, Collins is waiting for the lamps, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

The lamps! What lamps?

AGATHA.

Please, sir, Collins says that Mr Rastall has come to borrow the carriage lamps, sir, and he didn't like to refuse him, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

Mr Rastall? The lamps? I don't understood what you mean. Send Collins to me.

AGATHA.

Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

SHERRINGTON.

Dr Elwood, I entreat you for your sake to listen to me. It will kill Grace, if we do not *appear* to be reconciled.

DR ELWOOD.

I cannot enter into the matter further, Mr Sherrington. After I have seen my daughter I will send for you again—should it be necessary.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Furiously*) You want to separate her from me. You mean to get her for yourself utterly and entirely, and blot me out of her life. I can see that, Dr Elwood, but you will not succeed now. Grace is mine. Do you think that she would have come to me and be in my house now, unless she looked upon herself as my wife?

DR ELWOOD.

Your wife. You *have* a wife already?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes, legally, but my wife is nothing to me, and never was anything to me, as you know. It's not the time now to think of the world, or legal ties, or other people's judgments. It's *Grace* we've got to think of. (*He pauses, then continues.*) For the last time, Dr Elwood, I entreat you to understand. You *must* listen. It's for *Grace's* sake that you cannot get rid of me now. You must realise what her love for me means to her. She wanted love and I gave it to her. You shut her away from me, and *yet* she came to me. *You* didn't see what was in her heart. And now you can't treat her as an ignorant child, to be protected by you. She isn't a child, she's a woman. She's living in her feeling for me. If you try to destroy *that* you will destroy her. I *would* disappear if that would give her

happiness, but it won't. If she hasn't me, as well as you, it will kill her.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Slowly*) Mr Sherrington, you are a very astute man. . . .

Enter Agatha.

DR ELWOOD.

(*In exasperation*) What do you want?

AGATHA.

Please, sir, Collins isn't in the coach-house, sir. I think he's gone after Mr Rastall.

DR ELWOOD.

Gone after Mr Rastall?

AGATHA.

Yes, sir. I think so, sir; I can't find him anywhere, sir.

DR ELWOOD.

Ah! Ah! This is very extraordinary. Ah! Ah! Ask Miss Dorothea to come and speak to me, when I ring.

AGATHA.

Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Deliberately*) Mr Sherrington, you are a very astute man, and no doubt you have calculated that by playing on my fears you will cover up your own position, and force me to accept you in some form or other. But you will never do that. If Grace is suffering now, it is for your rascality and for your heartlessness. When this load of deceit has been lifted from her mind she will soon recover her balance. As to any love you say that she has for you, you have extorted it from her by your arts, as a seducer of women; and any further connection with you can only be harmful and pernicious to her. You can give her nothing but a shameful position in the eyes of the world; and I absolutely refuse to believe that your love is necessary for her in any shape or form. I know my daughter better than you can do. She has been too weak to resist you, and she has allowed herself to be beguiled temporarily into these miserable relations. But *I* shall protect her from the world now. Not you. You have no claim to do so, legal or moral. The only service you can do her is not to trouble her.

[*A tap is heard on the window.*

If her condition requires that I should send for you, I will do so, but not otherwise.

SHERRINGTON.

(*With cold determination*) Very well. I shall not give her up.

Enter Aunt Dorothea.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

James, I'm sorry to interrupt you and Mr Sherrington, but I can't think why Grace doesn't come back. I feel so anxious about her.

DR ELWOOD.

You need have no uneasiness about Grace, Dorothea. She is in Mr Sherrington's house, and I'm going now with the pony trap to fetch her.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

In Mr Sherrington's house, James!

DR ELWOOD.

Yes. I will tell you about it afterwards, Dorothea This is not the time.

[*A tap is heard on the window.*

AUNT DOROTHEA.

(*Advancing into the room*) What's that! Somebody's tapping on the window.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Angrily*) Nonsense! Nothing of the kind!

AUNT DOROTHEA.

(*Peering through the pane*) But I'm sure I heard somebody tapping, James. Didn't you, Mr Sherrington?

SHERRINGTON.

Yes. I thought I heard somebody.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Angrily*) Nonsense! (*He goes to the French window, opens it and looks out, and shuts it with a bang.*) There is nobody there, Dorothea.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

I'm sure there *was* somebody, James.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Sarcastically*) Well, that somebody, whoever it was, has disappeared. (*He bolts the window angrily and pulls one of the curtains across it.*)

[*Aunt Dorothea retires into room.*

AUNT DOROTHEA.

And Collins hasn't come back either. Agatha thinks he's gone after Mr Rastall—about the lamps, he said.

DR ELWOOD.

We will talk of that later. Ah! Ah! Dorothea!

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Yes, James.

DR ELWOOD.

Send Agatha round to Mr Rastall's at once, and if Collins is there he is to come back *immediately*.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Yes, James. (*Going out unwillingly.*)

DR ELWOOD.

Immediately, Dorothea.

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Yes, James. [*Exit.*

SHERRINGTON.

You have forgotten one thing, Dr Elwood, that gives me a permanent right to be with Grace now, and that is—that she may be a mother. It is *you* who have lost your rights in the face of that. Her duty is not towards *you* now.

DR ELWOOD.

Mr Sherrington, I refuse to hear another word.

SHERRINGTON.

(*Violently*) You refuse to hear another word! you!

And do you think that you have any right to speak as a father? You who have never let Grace be herself, who never wanted her to be herself, you who have asked her all her life to live only in *your* thoughts and *your* feelings. *You* never thought that she must have a life of her own. You who have shut her up and kept her to *yourself*. She has been suffocated and starved in secret, but *you* didn't see it. For nearly a year now she has been forced to conceal what she felt, what *I* am to her, afraid of speaking my name, afraid of your *jealousy*. It is my love she is living in now. You think that you can get rid of me because I've brought this on her, but it's *this* that binds us together. Do you think that I would give her up to you *now?* (*He pauses, and continues less violently*) Dr Elwood, for the last time I offer this arrangement—that we share Grace's life together. If you refuse, I shall take her away to-night, for I will not leave her at your mercy. She is *mine*. Do you understand me? She is *mine, part of me*. If you drive me to it, I will keep her out of your hands. [*A loud tap on the window is heard.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Breathing hard*) Mr Sherrington, you have seduced my daughter, and your unscrupulousness shall not gain your ends for you. I refuse absolutely to make any compromise whatsoever.

[*The tapping continues. Dr Elwood goes angrily to the window, fumbles with the*

handle, and opens the window. Old Collins the gardener appears. There is something unusual in his look. He steps into the room and advances slowly into the middle, holding his hat before him. Dr Elwood follows him in astonishment.

What do you what, Collins?

[*Collins at first does not speak, but opens and shuts his mouth. Then he catches sight of Sherrington.*

COLLINS.

(*To Sherrington, holding his hat before him*) Good evening, Zur!

[*Dr Elwood sits down bewildered in his chair, gazing at Collins.*

COLLINS.

They've sent I on to tell 'ee. (*Slowly*) I came round to th' winder, Zur, for I dursen't tell Miss Dorothy. (*He approaches nearer to Elwood.*) It's consarning Miss Grace, Zur. (*He opens and shuts his mouth like a fish*) (*in a loud whisper, pointing without*) She's down there—she's fallen into the river!

SHERRINGTON.

Into the river!

COLLINS.

They've a gotten of her out. They're a bringing

of her up, Mr Rastall, old Bob, and Jack Clatworthy. They sent I on to tell 'ee.

SHERRINGTON.

Ahh! Where? Which road? (*Furiously*) Which road?

COLLINS.

Up th' meader, Zur.

[*Sherrington dashes out through the window, while Dr Elwood remains seated, staring at Collins.*

DR ELWOOD.

I don't understand what you're saying. Sit down.

COLLINS.

Miss Grace—Zur.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Raising his voice*) Sit down!

[*Old Collins sits down awkwardly.*

DR ELWOOD.

(*Collecting himself*) You say my daughter, Grace, has fallen into the river?

COLLINS.

(*Respectfully*) Yes, Zur. They're a bringing her up th' meader.

DR ELWOOD.

(*Leaning forward*) Is she—*conscious?*

COLLINS.

(*With a sort of sob, and hoarsely*) She ha' passed away, Zur.

DR ELWOOD.

Passed away? What do you *mean* by that expression?

COLLINS.

She ha' passed away, Zur. There ain't no breath in the body.

[*Dr Elwood stares at Collins without speaking. The door is flung open, and Aunt Dorothea comes gasping into the room.*

AUNT DOROTHEA.

Oh, James! James! Grace!

CURTAIN.

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